

2020 Public Policy Priorities

Public Policy Platform Issue: Access to Services

NAMI Maryland strongly supports the reduction of barriers that prevent access to timely, effective, and affordable services. From routine denials of coverage, excessive appointment wait times, or lack of in-network providers and burdensome authorization requirements, accessing mental health care in Maryland can be difficult and expensive. Many of these barriers violate federal parity laws that protect the rights of individuals with mental illness to fairly and equitably access the services they need. We will continue to advocate for effective outreach, engagement, treatment and community supports for all those affected by mental illness in Maryland, no matter their race, social, geographical, economic or other status.

In 2020, NAMI Maryland will focus advocacy efforts on measures to hold insurance carriers accountable on parity requirements (similar accessibility and cost for mental illness as for other kinds of medical treatment), protect the rights of Marylanders to get affordable treatment quickly, and strengthen the way behavioral health and substance use services are delivered to the 300,000 children and adults in our public behavioral health system.

Public Policy Platform Issue: Criminal Justice and Forensic Issues

Failure to divert individuals with mental illness to a health care setting rather than criminal justice intervention takes a toll on communities, is costly for law enforcement and corrections and tragic for individuals with mental illness. NAMI strongly supports a greater commitment to identifying and treating those already involved with the criminal justice system, and to prevent individuals with mental illness from interacting with the criminal justice system wherever possible.

In 2020, NAMI Maryland will advocate for stronger coordination and supports for local crisis intervention teams and expansion of crisis services, timely behavioral health evaluations performed in criminal justice settings, and increased bed availability for forensic patients and community-based providers.

Public Policy Platform Issue: Funding for Behavioral Health Services

Maryland's mental health service delivery system is fragmented and remains underfunded. Many with mental illness still experience disparities in the quality, timeliness, and availability of mental health services based on where they live in Maryland. As part of the "Keep the Door Open" coalition defending funding for consumers, we successfully passed the HOPE Act, legislation that requires funding for increased services and reimbursement rates for behavioral health providers. In 2018, we successfully passed the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program, legislation that provides \$12 million in funding spread out over three years for local community crisis services support. Protecting these and other funds are an on-going priority for NAMI.

In 2020, NAMI Maryland will advocate for full funding of the "Keep the Door Open" priorities, support increased funding for school-based mental health services, and suicide prevention programs.