

April 14, 2020

Hello NAMI NH Family and Friends,

I hope this message finds you and your family safe and well during these very challenging times. We are now 30 days out from the Governor's state of emergency and subsequent COVID-19 restrictions on nonessential business and travel.

It has been a very busy time here at NAMI NH as we move our mission forward during the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue the work of *improving the lives of all people impacted by mental illness and suicide through support, education and advocacy.*

NAMI NH staff and volunteers have worked closely together to provide education and supports through remote platforms. Our Rochester and Manchester *Family-to-Family* classes were both in week 10 of the 12-week course when we suspended all in-person meetings. Both groups were able to finish out their classes using remote technology – including Manchester having a scheduled *In Our Own Voice* speaker present to the class. Support groups in Keene, Nashua, and beyond have held remote meetings and there was a wealth of information sharing among volunteers and staff.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, two of the new 8-week *Family-to-Family* classes are now meeting virtually. Several NAMI NH local support groups and a few suicide loss survivor groups are also meeting remotely, and an 8-week online *Parents Meeting the Challenge* just kicked off. Last week, a new weekly Family Support Group debuted online.

Calls to NAMI NH's Info & Resource Line (1-800-242-6264) are now addressed 7 days a week. We have also made a concerted effort to have our website (NAMINH.org) be NH's go-to place for information about local, regional and national COVID-19 mental health response and supports.

NAMI NH continues to advocate at the state and national level on the need for both general and COVID-19 specific mental health supports. We are pleased to report that the NH Department of Health and Human Services was able to operationalize the foundation laid during the 2019 legislative session to move all children admissions from New Hampshire Hospital to Hampstead Hospital in mid-March, and then immediately begin admitting adults who were being boarded in EDs. In early March, the number of people being boarded in emergency departments averaged approximately 40 individuals. Since the transfer of children to Hampstead Hospital, the number of adults waiting in EDs has been mostly in single digits, though reached 10 over the past weekend (inclusive of individuals in mental health crisis waiting at correctional facilities). There have been 0 children waiting for beds since admissions were transferred.

Meanwhile, 17 months after ACLU-NH filed a lawsuit against the State of NH in Federal District Court regarding people boarded in EDs without a probable cause hearing within 72 hours, the first hearing was held on a motion by the State to dismiss. Representing the State, the Attorney General's office argued people were not entitled to hearings until after they were admitted to a designated receiving facility. A decision has not yet been rendered by the court.

NAMI NH remains very concerned by the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of Granite Staters. The uncertain timelines of the state of emergency, closure of schools and businesses, social distancing, and economic factors are causing a lot of stress and anxiety. We are grateful to the frontline healthcare workers and first responders for their heroic efforts, and understand they may have unique mental health needs during and after this crisis.

We encourage you all to practice good self-care skills, visit NAMINH.org for online support and resources, look out for your friends, neighbors and others, and reach out to those who may be isolated. Later this month, NAMI NH will begin twice-weekly free online yoga and meditation sessions – we hope you'll find the time to join us. In the meantime, please let us know how NAMI NH can assist you.

Take good care,



Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director