nami
National Alliance on Mental Illness

New York State
NAMINYS.ORG

NO RECOVERY WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH
S.O.S. SAVE OUR SYSTEM
YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED

WE ARE FACING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS OF UNPRECEDENTED PROPORTIONS

- COVID-19 and social distancing practices have increased demand for mental health and substance use services.
- The ramifications of COVID-19 are also wreaking havoc on our mental health system and those services that are desperately needed are now endangered.
- Mental health and substance abuse services in both the community and hospital settings are now more vulnerable than ever before and many life-saving programs may soon close their doors for good.
- We need NAMI-NYS advocates to share their stories and explain that we cannot recover from COVID-19 without increased mental health services.

THREATS TO COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH HOUSING AND SUBSTANCE USE PROVIDERS

- COVID-19 has led to a revenue shortfall and a budget deficit. Because of this non-profit mental health, mental health housing and substance use programs, which have contracts with the state are now having 20% of their state support withheld.
- Without a significant influx of revenue, these withholds could become permanent cuts.
- It is impossible for these programs to operate on 80% of their budget long-term.
- We cannot let our mental health system collapse when the federal government fails to supply adequate funding.
- New Yorkers need to develop their own rescue plans for behavioral health services.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL BEDS ARE VANISHING

- As part of New York's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, hospitals are mandated to have 30% of their beds available in case of another surge.
- Many hospitals are using the mandate to reduce psychiatric and substance use beds and in some cases eliminate entire units.
- There is no guarantee that these beds will come back post-COVID and we fear many of them will be lost for good as psychiatric beds have long been targeted for reduction because they are deemed less profitable.
- We must continue to put pressure on hospitals in our communities that are reducing psychiatric beds

#SAVENYSBEHAVIORALHEALTH   #SAVEOURPSYCHBEDS   #ACT4MENTALHEALTH

HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

1. S**chedule a meeting with your legislators:** NAMI-NYS can assist you in making appointments and provide you with talking points. Email Matthew@naminys.org for more information.

2. **Spread the word on social media:**
Sample Tweet: Save NYS's **#MentalHealth** services!!! Mental health services which are more important than ever are also in jeopardy **@NYGovCuomo @NYGov Speaker** @CarlHeastie and President @AndreaSCousins we need you to fund community-based mental health services **#Act4MentalHealth #SaveOurSystem**

Sample Facebook Post: Help me save mental health services in New York State. I/My family/ My family and I (pick whichever best applies) have benefitted from being able to access mental health support. However, now as mental health services are needed more than ever, these vital programs are in jeopardy. Community providers which provide everything from therapy to housing programs are currently having 20% of their budgets withheld. These life-saving programs were underfunded to begin with and continuing to operate without the proper funding may be impossible. We cannot lose these services.

Please join me in telling Governor Andrew Cuomo, Speaker Carl E. Heastie and Senate President Andrea Stewart-Cousins to restore the funding to mental health and substance use programs. **#Act4MentalHealth #SaveOurServices**

3. **Submit a Letter to Your Local Newspaper:** Sample letter:
The COVID-19 outbreak has prompted a renewed attention to mental health and people are discussing the importance of mental health in a way they never have before. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that this silver-lining surrounds a serious thunderstorm when it comes to mental health treatment, and to make matters worse we may not have shelter from this storm.

A recent CDC report details the sharp rise in mental health issues, suicidal thoughts and substance use during the outbreak. While COVID-19 has increased the need for mental health services, it has also put mental health and substance use services, which are offered in both the community and hospital settings, in serious jeopardy.

COVID-19 has led to a revenue shortfall and a budget deficit; because of this, non-profit mental health and substance use providers who have contracts with the state are now having 20% of their support withheld. Without a significant influx of revenue, these withholds could become permanent cuts. These vital programs were underfunded to begin with and it's impossible for these programs to operate on 80% of their budget long-term.

A state mandate asked hospitals to have 30% of their beds available in case of another COVID surge. Many hospitals have disproportionately targeted psychiatric and detox beds to meet the mandate. Some hospitals have totally eliminated their psychiatric beds; in many cases I fear that the beds will be lost for good, as hospitals have long aimed to abolish these beds due to their lack of profitability.

New York cannot begin to recover from the impact of COVID-19 without addressing the mental health trauma caused by the devastating pandemic, social distancing, economic concerns and racism. As the need for psychiatric services increases, we must ensure that we have a system in place to meet that need.

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