2021 Legislative Action Agenda

No Recovery Without Mental Health
NYS Must Address Mental Health in Order to Move Forward

Ensure Access to Appropriate Services and Medication
Access to mental health services and appropriate medications is more important than ever. As the demand for mental health services is at an all-time high, we must be able to meet the demand, this is why NAMI-NYS is advocating to advance the NYS-OMH’s efforts to expand crisis stabilization and telehealth services. We must also fully utilize our mental health responders by allowing Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs) to diagnose and have their services reimbursed by Medicaid. NYS also needs to address suicide by passing Nicole’s Law.

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♦ To avert program closures, access and reductions in service availability, the State must immediately provide full funding for mental health services and restore the 5% across the board (ATB) cut imposed on providers in the SFY 2021-22 Executive Budget.

♦ We must ensure that we are maximizing every dollar that is supporting the system. The SFY 2022 Executive Budget proposes the $22 million in savings due to closures but prevents the re-investment of any savings into behavioral health community-based services. Behavioral Health advocates urge the Legislature to seek inclusion of any savings toward reinvestment in behavioral health community-based services and oppose the language to “freeze” the Community Reinvestment Act.

♦ NAMI-NYS supports minimum wage increase for the behavioral health workforce

Improve the Criminal Justice – Mental Illness Interface
There has been increased attention for police and criminal justice reform, what is not being discussed is that more than 60% of those incarcerated have a diagnosable mental illness. We must do better to divert people with mental illness from jails and into treatment as well as improve interactions between police and people with mental illness.

♦ Reinstate the funding for the Institute for Police, Mental Health and Community Collaboration to implement Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) across the state. There is $400k from the SFY 2019-20 that still have not been allocated to the institute and the SFY 2020-21 had no funding for the institute. We must refund this critical program.

♦ Support Daniel’s Law (A4697/S.4814) Which would ensure that a mental health crisis is met with a mental health response by having mental health response units handle mental health and substance abuse crises calls in our communities with safety, care and compassion.

♦ Support A.2277/S.2836 the HALT bill which reforms the use of solitary confinement.

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