

March 16, 2020

Hello NAMI NH Family and Friends,

It has been a challenging week as we as individuals, families, schools, communities, workplaces, the State of New Hampshire, the United States, and the larger world all try to come to terms with, and respond effectively to, COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

“Social distancing,” a phrase unknown to most of us a few weeks ago, is the new norm with schools closed, events and gatherings cancelled or postponed, and many businesses and organizations closing and/or encouraging people to stay home and work remotely. Beyond the sharp decline in the stock market will likely come an economic ripple effect, of which the true impact on individuals and families may not be seen or felt for weeks or months.

While much of this is covered in daily news reports and press conferences, there is little coverage about the effect on people’s mental health. Certainly, the relentless news coverage and uncertainty is making us all feel anxious and maybe a little fearful. For individuals who have a mental illness, these feelings are likely to be amplified or intensified. **A big challenge we all face is how do we distance ourselves socially without becoming isolated, or allowing some of the most vulnerable in our society to become further isolated?**

On the plus side, when past national crises have occurred, they often brought out the best in us individually and collectively. We recognize people are stressed and anxious, and we pull together to help.

In order to try and get ahead of the curve on COVID-19, NAMI NH is following the guidance of public health officials and suspending in-person support groups, meetings, trainings and educational programs, and postponing our Annual Conference. We are working closely with NAMI NH volunteers to provide technical assistance so that some of these supports and programs can take place using online technology. More details about NAMI NH’s response can be found at NAMINH.org.

We do have several things to ask of you:

- Please take care of yourselves, and your families, by following recommendations of government and public health officials.
- Please watch out for people who may be vulnerable or isolated, or whose mental health may be negatively impacted by this situation. Check in with them regularly by phone, text, and social media.
- [Let us know](#) if someone is not doing well, and might benefit from NAMI NH’s supports.
- Please [let us know](#) if you have ideas or suggestions about how NAMI NH can more effectively respond in providing support to our members/volunteers and people affected by mental health and suicide.

Lastly, please join me in thanking the many dedicated mental health and healthcare providers who are continuing to provide important direct services and supports during this time.

Take good care,



Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director