

NAMI NH Statement on State of NH's Planned Purchase of Hampstead Hospital *(October 14, 2021)*

NAMI New Hampshire (National Alliance on Mental Illness) welcomes the news of the State of New Hampshire's planned purchase of Hampstead Hospital. While our organization has many questions and looks forward to more details, we believe this is a significant step forward in addressing the current mental health crisis, which has hit youth and young adults especially hard during the pandemic.

Consistent with national data, NH youth and young adults are reporting significant increases in stress, anxiety, and depression. The number of youth experiencing a mental health crisis who are in need of inpatient mental health treatment has more than tripled since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Yesterday, there were 18 youth being boarded in emergency departments around the state, awaiting inpatient admission. The process of holding a young person in an emergency room, with minimal treatment, is traumatizing for youth and their families.

Despite this dramatic increase in need for child/youth inpatient mental health beds, no other hospital has stepped forward to offer additional inpatient capacity for youth. As part of the 2019 NH State Budget, and a subsequent contract approved by the Governor and Executive Council, Hampstead Hospital agreed to provide inpatient mental health beds for youth starting in March 2020.

NAMI NH Executive Director Ken Norton stated, "As hospital mergers, acquisitions, and closures occur nationwide, NAMI NH supports Governor Sununu and the NH Department of Health and Human Services in taking this step to ensure that New Hampshire families who have a child in a mental health crisis will continue to have an option to receive inpatient care in the Granite State."

Prior to March 2020, the NH Department of Health and Human Services operated the Philbrook Children's Unit at New Hampshire Hospital – until that unit was transferred to Hampstead Hospital. Treatment services in the Philbrook Children's Unit were of a high caliber – the unit, along with the rest of New Hampshire Hospital, received The Joint Commission's Gold Seal accreditation with Dartmouth Hitchcock Health providing clinical leadership and quality psychiatric support.

While NAMI NH is not aware at this time who will provide psychiatric and medical services at Hampstead Hospital in the future, we have confidence in the current leadership team at New Hampshire Hospital and the NH Department of Health and Human Services to skillfully manage this transition while ensuring high quality inpatient care for children and youth.

NAMI New Hampshire is grateful to the staff at Hampstead Hospital for their tireless efforts to address the mental health crisis in our state over the past 18 months. Operating an inpatient mental health facility in the midst of a pandemic presented many challenges – Hampstead Hospital's staff worked extraordinarily hard to serve children and families in our state.

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About NAMI New Hampshire

NAMI New Hampshire is a grassroots organization working to improve the lives of all people affected by mental illness and suicide through support, education and advocacy.

Learn more at NAMINH.org.