



New Hampshire

Public Policy Platform

rev. 2023

(Order of items does not indicate relative priority.)

Education and Support for Individuals with Mental Illness, Children with Serious Emotional Disorders, and Their Families

NAMI New Hampshire believes that comprehensive education regarding mental illness for individuals with a mental illness, their families, and the general public is necessary to best empower our communities to support mental wellness. Active participation by supportive family members and peers can also be a key component to successful recovery. As such, appropriate education must be free and widely available to individuals and families at all stages of life, raising awareness, reducing stigma, and enabling advocacy at both the individual and systems level for mental health treatment. Where possible and appropriate, these programs should be peer-designed and directed, adapted to the needs of each community. Additionally, we support funding and workforce support aimed at the design, delivery, and evaluation of these programs.

Evidence-Based Mental Health Services in a Community Setting

NAMI New Hampshire believes that, when possible, recovery is best accomplished within one's community, and that all mental health services should be delivered in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting for the individual. Early access to a full range of mental health services that are evidence-based, culturally competent, and occur within one's community whenever possible can prevent the need for acute care and occurrences of incarceration and homelessness. We support a system of care that provides all levels of treatment, including both inpatient and outpatient with mobile capacity, residential support services, case management, appropriate and effective medication, family and peer supports, including population specific peer support groups, and round-the-clock-services. We also support program evaluation and research to determine the effectiveness of these services, which is essential in an evidence-based system.

Integration of Healthcare Delivery

NAMI NH believes that physical and mental are inextricably linked and that treatment for mental illnesses and serious emotional disorders should be an integral part of comprehensive healthcare services. An individual's treatment for any condition should consider the entirety of the patient, address the social determinants of health, include families/natural supports as part of the recovery process, and utilize collaboration between a diverse network of professionals. Communities, insurance networks, and practices should strive to integrate physical and behavioral healthcare delivery systems at all levels, including providing screenings and services from licensed

mental health professionals in all healthcare settings. Access to proven integrated care models such as Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) should be available statewide.

Treatment for Co-Occurring Disorders

NAMI NH believes that treatment for a behavioral health condition should always include the evaluation and treatment of any potential co-occurring disorders. In order for any treatment to be successful, it must be inclusive of the needs of the entirety of the patient. People with a mental illness are more likely to experience a substance use disorder than those not affected by a mental illness. Failure to address co-occurring disorders can harm the recovery process. As such, NAMI NH supports policies that increase funding, awareness, and availability of resources for providers to treat co-occurring disorders.

Access to Medication

NAMI NH believes that medications can play a critical role in promoting recovery from mental illness and serious emotional disorders. All individuals should have access to the most effective medications for them as determined in collaboration with their health care providers at an affordable cost and without barriers such as step therapy or unduly burdensome prior authorization requirements. Additionally, NAMI NH supports policies that reduce barriers to accessing medically necessary medications.

Access to and Enforcement of Parity of Insurance Coverage

NAMI NH believes that insurance coverage for physical and mental healthcare services should be equivalent. Insurance plans and programs must manage utilization (including medication authorization), network adequacy, and provider reimbursement equally across all healthcare areas. As such, NAMI NH supports policies that would eliminate prior authorization requirements for emergency mental health care and require insurers to pay for critical community-based services including, but not limited to, Mobile Crisis Response, peer and family support, Critical Time Intervention, Coordinated Specialty Care, and Assertive Community Treatment. NAMI NH also supports policies that would require the NH Insurance Department to administer regular market conduct analyses to determine compliance and require insurers to regularly review their networks to demonstrate their capacity to meet demand and/or report steps to increase capacity. Additionally, consumers who are not able to access in-network care must be allowed to choose out-of-network providers whose services would be covered at in-network rates. NAMI NH opposes all exceptions to parity requirements for quantifiable and non-quantifiable treatment limits and rehabilitation services.

Public Awareness to Eliminate Stigma and Discrimination

NAMI New Hampshire believes one of the biggest barriers to care for individuals with mental illness is stigma and discrimination. We support funding for services and other opportunities to maximize recovery, including education and outreach programs for youth, businesses, civic organizations, government agencies, law enforcement and the general public to help reduce stigma and discrimination. NAMI NH believes that, when possible, “discrimination” should be used when discussing this issue since referring to discriminatory behavior as “stigma” does not fully represent people’s experiences with discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare and more.

Suicide Prevention and Postvention

NAMI New Hampshire believes that most suicide deaths can be prevented with a comprehensive, community-wide approach that works through both public and private organizations and across systems. This approach must include efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination through public awareness campaigns and increased education for individuals, families, and students, as well as training for providers, first responders, teachers, and school staff. Additionally, communities must provide early access to mental health assessment and treatment, including family and peer supports, a centralized mental health crisis and suicide prevention response, and access to state-wide Mobile Crisis with the capacity for teams to meet with individuals in crisis within a reasonable amount of time. NAMI NH supports policies that encourage, fund, and facilitate these initiatives.

De-Criminalization of Individuals with Mental Illness and Children with Serious Emotional Disorders

NAMI New Hampshire believes that people who commit serious crimes should be prosecuted; however, we oppose the increasing criminalization of individuals with mental illness and believe that rehabilitation should be a key focus for justice-involved individuals with a mental illness. As such, we support improved public education to dispel myths and stigma surrounding mental illness and violence, the diversion of individuals with mental illness from the judicial and corrections systems when appropriate, and the provision of treatment in community and hospital settings rather than jails or prisons when appropriate. NAMI NH believes that law enforcement first responders should receive a minimum of 40 hours of foundational Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to better assure safety for all parties and decrease lethal interactions. Further, mental health courts must be available statewide, and when interactions with the corrections system is necessary, there must be the provision of evidence-based and trauma-informed mental health treatment aimed at promoting recovery, as well as CIT and educational training for corrections officers.

Legalization of Cannabis for Medical or Recreational Purposes

NAMI New Hampshire does not take a position on cannabis legalization. However, NAMI NH is monitoring the emerging research and ongoing conversations regarding cannabis' influence on the brain and acknowledges the documented correlation between cannabis use and the onset of schizophrenia or other psychotic conditions, especially in youth and young adults. NAMI NH believes that any responsible approach to legalization must be developed with a commitment to limiting the risk to the mental and behavioral health and wellbeing of the public. If a policy goes forward, it should include a broad array of safeguards to protect children, youth, and young adults, limit the potency of cannabis products to avoid negative mental health outcomes, and provide significant funding for mental health treatment as well as educational campaigns and other prevention initiatives.

Access to Firearms

NAMI NH believes that firearms present a higher risk of lethality in suicide attempts, and that firearms should not be easier to obtain than mental health care. NAMI NH supports sensible and effective firearms regulation, including emergency risk protective orders, voluntary do-not-sell lists, safe storage requirements, and reasonable waiting periods when purchasing a firearm. However, in the absence of immediate demonstrated risk, people should not be treated differently with respect to firearms regulation because of their lived experience with mental illness. NAMI NH acknowledges the grave mental health impacts of loss, terror, and trauma resulting from mass shootings and firearm violence. As such, we support research into the causes and effects of gun violence in the US, as well as reasonable, fairly-applied policies that may prevent these tragedies.

Access to Care and Freedom from Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Individuals

NAMI NH believes that all people should be treated with respect and dignity and should have access to mental health care free from discrimination or interference. LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those who are transgender or gender-nonconforming, are at an elevated risk for experiencing anxiety and depression and are more likely to consider and attempt suicide, often due to discrimination and rejection. Therefore, NAMI NH opposes harmful policies targeting LGBTQ+ individuals and supports policies that provide access to gender-affirming healthcare.

Access to Care and Freedom from Discrimination for Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups

NAMI NH believes that racial discrimination is a public health issue that imposes significant barriers to mental health care for racial/ethnic minority groups. Among individuals living with a mental illness, racial minority groups are less likely to receive mental health services. Additionally, disparities in cultural understanding by providers have the potential to exclude or jeopardize the success of programs and treatment and may also contribute to under or misdiagnosis. Therefore, NAMI NH supports policies that increase cultural education for providers

and the general public, and that address the racial disparities in mental health care and interaction with the justice system.

Maternal Health Care

NAMI NH believes that comprehensive physical and mental healthcare supports and programs are required to support the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and families during and after pregnancy. The U.S. maternal mortality rate continues to rise, with suicide and substance use as the leading causes of death within one-year postpartum. NAMI NH supports policies that enable early intervention in mental health for pregnant individuals and expansion of Medicaid coverage for postpartum services.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

NAMI NH believes that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a variety of short and long-term mental health impacts, particularly affecting youth and young adults. Since the onset of the pandemic, rates of mental illness symptoms, substance misuse, and suicide have increased. NAMI NH also recognizes that the full extent of the pandemic’s impact, especially on developing minds, is not currently known. Future research should pay close attention to the impacts of isolation, virtual learning, familial loss, and mask wearing on an individual’s emotional development, as well as the impact that COVID infection and Long COVID may have on the development or exacerbation of mental illness. NAMI NH supports policies that ensure access to in-person and virtual healthcare and programs aiding those impacted by financial instability.

Availability of Affordable Housing Options

NAMI NH believes that stable housing is critical to recovery and that an array of affordable, state-wide housing options must be available for people with mental illnesses. These options should range from independent living to supportive housing and group homes, with additional funding and support services where appropriate. NAMI NH supports policies that provide these options within one’s chosen community to enhance recovery and provide the best access to education, employment, further treatment, and one’s family and loved ones – and that allows the fluidity necessary for people to move between levels of care as their recovery progresses. All state, federal, and privately funded housing initiatives should be developed with these needs in mind and must not discriminate in access for individuals living with a mental illness.

Means to Address Healthcare Workforce Shortages

NAMI NH believes that a strong mental health workforce is crucial to addressing the needs of individuals living with mental illness in New Hampshire. Therefore, NAMI NH supports funding for Medicaid rate increases, conditional licensing and license compacts where appropriate, the advancement of the peer workforce, and other policies that would support the expansion and strengthening of New Hampshire’s healthcare workforce.