

2024 NH Legislative Session Recap

Across the state, the rallying call of mental health for all can be heard among advocates and policymakers alike. Though difficult, much was accomplished in the 2024 New Hampshire Legislative Session. Thanks to the work of advocates statewide, several policies passed that directly benefit Granite Staters affected by mental illness and suicide. We celebrate these successes and the tireless work of advocates working to strengthen mental health and suicide prevention here in New Hampshire. However, much work remains to be done. As we reflect on the challenges of the 2024 New Hampshire Legislative Session, we are struck by the lost opportunities—opportunities for New Hampshire to strengthen its resources, protect its citizens, and improve conditions for all. With these setbacks in mind, NAMI NH remains committed to building a New Hampshire where all people affected by mental illness have hope, help, and health.

Access to Services

We are heartened by the NH Legislature’s commitment to take a hard look at our mental health system and find new ways to increase access to services. In the 2024 session, several bills passed requiring the legislature to study the state’s mental health services. This includes the creation of committees to study competency restoration services and coverage for emergency mental health services for individuals under the age of 21, and the continuation of the commission studying post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders. Further, a bill was passed adopting the interstate social work licensure compact, which will greatly improve continuity of care for patients and increase professional mobility for mental health providers. While these are small steps, they are crucial ones, through which our state may further understand and address the specific needs of Granite Staters.

Find Help, Find Hope.

Suicide Prevention

One of the most striking lost opportunities this session was the failure of several bills seeking to prevent suicide through lethal means safety. Among these legislative efforts was the implementation of waiting periods before firearm purchases, the establishment of extreme risk protection orders, and the creation of a voluntary waiver of the right to purchase a firearm. With these losses in mind, there is a clear need to educate our legislators on the prevalence and lethality of firearms suicide and explore further opportunities to promote lethal means safety.

Children and Youth

Thanks to the efforts of child and youth advocates, significant progress was made in expanding and improving the services available to Granite State youth. This includes legislation strengthening the oversight of out-of-home placements, ensuring the safety of youth, and improving mental health outcomes. The passage of a bill adding an eating disorders helpline to student ID cards will expand awareness of, and access to, mental health resources for young people. Further, a bill was passed addressing childhood hunger, a key determinant of health, through the implementation of a summer EBT program. Finally, advocates were successful in defeating a bill that would have prohibited social-emotional learning in schools. While we regret the failure of an additional bill that would've enabled greater oversight and coordination of resources available to youth experiencing homelessness, we are ultimately encouraged by the many steps taken this session to care for Granite State youth.

Further impacting children and youth, in the 2024 Legislative Session, New Hampshire experienced a wave of legislation aimed at restricting the rights of LGBTQ+ youth, especially those who are transgender and nonbinary. Through the hard work of advocates across the Granite State, the vast majority of these bills were defeated. We are grateful for the many LGBTQ+ advocates who shared their voices and deeply personal stories as part of this powerful advocacy. While there were many wins, multiple harmful bills passed the NH legislature. Together, these bills dictate the sports transgender youth can play and the healthcare they can receive. Through the passage of this legislation that decreases affirming environments and restricts access to

healthcare, the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth in NH will be negatively impacted. We are gravely concerned by the mental health effects of these policies and the damaging stigma and discrimination they promote. Our policies must promote mental wellness and increase access to social support and necessary care, rather than limiting it. NAMI NH, along with advocates in every corner of our state, will continue our collective work to nurture and grow supportive communities, to help people access the care they need, and to eliminate stigma and discrimination

Housing and Workforce Investments

To address the shortages exacerbating our mental health crisis, there is a continued need to invest in New Hampshire's workforce and the availability of housing. We are disappointed by the failure of legislation that would have increased funding for transitional and supported housing through Community Mental Health Centers. We are, however, grateful for the passage of legislation that creates voluntary certification for Community Health Workers, as well as a bill creating a committee to study the impact of the housing crisis on people with disabilities. As we look forward to future sessions, we continue to emphasize the need for significant investment in these two crucial elements of our state's wellness.

Justice Involvement

Throughout the session, NAMI NH worked closely with the sponsors of legislation aimed at complying with a federal requirement to report individuals who have been involuntarily committed to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, rendering them unable to purchase a firearm. In this partnership, we sought to ensure that individuals with a mental illness were treated fairly, were not exposed to stigma, discrimination, or dangerous encounters, and that the legislation provided for the restoration of rights when the person becomes well.

Although the bill did not pass, we greatly appreciated the care and commitment of the sponsors in protecting the freedoms and wellbeing of individuals who have been involuntarily committed. The legislature took significant steps in expanding the resources available to justice-involved individuals. These efforts included the creation of veterans treatment courts, with a focus on

mental health services, as well as policies requiring the usage of validated screening tools and allowing for greater coordination of services in county corrections.

Looking Ahead

The need to invest in our communities remains urgent. With the events of the 2024 Legislative Session in mind, we must rally behind our successes and look to the work ahead to improve the conditions within which we all live. More than anything, the 2024 session exhibited the spirit of Granite State advocates and emphasized the importance of community: to organize, to act, to heal. As advocates, we must continue to stand in solidarity: for our families, for our friends, for ourselves, for mental health—for all. Remember, you are not alone.

We are already looking at priorities for the 2025 legislative session! Get involved with mental health advocacy by subscribing to [Public Policy Alerts](#).