



**NAMI New Hampshire and NAMI National Statements on  
Executive Order Targeting Homelessness and Criminalizing Mental Illness**

July 25, 2025

Concord, NH – NAMI New Hampshire reaffirms our dedication to community and evidence-based mental health services delivered in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting for the individual. The Executive Order issued by the White House on July 24, 2025 would reverse decades of progress for our mental health system and our loved ones. The issue of housing is a critical one, but it will not be solved by locking people up in jails, hospitals, or other institutions.

When writing about NAMI NH's beginnings in 2015, our Founder Peggy Straw shared:

"In 1972 following the death of my husband, one of my children became seriously mentally ill and I was determined that she not be incarcerated in 'Concord' as it was called then. I swore that she would not be one of the patients sitting on a bench in a housedress staring at the walls...If there was anything I could do, I would do it to prevent that."

Today, as we prepare to mark the 35th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26th, NAMI New Hampshire reaffirms our steadfast determination to prevent anyone's loved one from living out their life in an institution. While involuntary treatment and even commitment may sometimes be necessary for brief episodes of treatment, such measures should be a last resort and for the shortest period of time necessary to keep someone safe.

"Here at NAMI NH, we often use 'what would Peggy do' as our guiding star," said NAMI NH Executive Director Susan Stearns. "Today, Peggy would say, 'No, not my child nor anyone else's child should live in an institution.' And she would be right. All people with mental illness should have access to the care they need to be able to live a full life in their community."

*If you or someone you know needs immediate support, you can call, text, or chat confidentially with a trained crisis worker 24/7 through 988 at no cost.*

*To connect with free non-crisis NH mental health resources and support, contact NAMI NH's Info & Resource Line at 1-800-242-6264 (press 4) or [info@NAMINH.org](mailto:info@NAMINH.org).*



Arlington, VA — Yesterday, the White House released a new Executive Order, “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets,” which directs federal agencies to make it easier to involuntarily treat people with serious mental illnesses as part of a bid to address homelessness across the United States. While addressing the nationwide homelessness crisis is urgent and necessary, yesterday’s executive order promoting institutionalization of people with mental illness raises grave concerns for NAMI and our community. NAMI’s Chief Executive Officer Daniel H. Gillison, Jr. said:

“Mental illness is not a crime, and people with mental illness deserve to be treated as human beings, with dignity and respect. While we agree that homelessness is an urgent crisis in our country, to truly address the systemic causes of this crisis, we should be pouring resources into treatment to improve early access to care and investing in supportive housing and other wrap-around services.

It’s always ideal – and best – for an individual to engage in their own treatment. Yet, too many NAMI families know that isn’t always possible. Unfortunately, yesterday’s order concerningly focuses broadly on institutionalization and not on real solutions that we know work in helping people lead better lives.”

NAMI **believes** that in the rare instances where voluntary engagement in treatment is not possible, involuntary commitment should be used only as a last resort and only when it is believed to be in the best interests of the individual.

While it is unclear how the executive order will be carried out since state law governs the process of involuntary civil commitment, the order also urges moving away from a “housing first” approach, which has been successful in helping individuals stay connected to treatment and reduce homelessness. While NAMI is troubled by the overall order, it does include a direction to federal agencies to support crisis response services and prioritize funding for mental health and drug courts – strategies that NAMI supports.

This executive order comes at a time when significant cuts are being made to mental health services nationwide. Earlier this month, Congress **passed legislation** that will drastically cut Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, impacting millions of Americans. The Administration has rescinded more than \$1 billion in grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), with **more cuts** proposed for the next fiscal year.

These changes will result in far too many people being unable to get the treatment they need. When that happens, more people will be arrested, incarcerated, land in emergency rooms, lose their connection to family and community, and ultimately become homeless. NAMI’s Chief Advocacy Officer Hannah Wesolowski said:

“Rather than providing access to critical mental health services, this executive order appears to prioritize coercive tactics to move people who are homeless out of the public eye. This does nothing to address the root causes of homelessness, runs a high risk of exacerbating the homelessness crisis, and is not the way to address our mental health needs. People with mental illness deserve better.”

For more information on the public policies that NAMI supports, visit [nami.org/advocacy](https://nami.org/advocacy).