

*NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to helping the millions of Americans affected by mental health conditions. Our mission is to provide education, support, public awareness and advocacy so that all individuals and families affected by mental health conditions can build better lives. NAMI envisions a world where all people affected by mental health conditions live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a community that cares.*

## **SUMMARY OF NAMI WESTERN MASS ACTIVITIES - 2023**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

NAMI-WM's Board of Directors, with 11 volunteer members, who meet monthly to discuss relevant issues and any action to be taken, plan educational events, fundraising events, and consumer services. With a diverse board which includes family members, friends, administrators, persons with mental health conditions and other professionals. We currently have openings for Board positions.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

NAMI-WM is composed of over 500 active members. According to the National office our affiliate is one of the largest in the nation which serves Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin Counties.

### **STAFF**

Full-time (35 hour paid position per week) employee: Operations Manager

Part-time (up to 15 hours paid weekly) employee: Communications Coordinator

### **VOLUNTEERS**

NAMI-WM is a "grassroots" organization which depends highly upon trained volunteers to help with daily office tasks, newsletter editing, bulk mailings, maintain our resource library and mail out informational packets. Others participate in our educational and fundraising events. Several volunteers are trained to answer phones in order to assist with our helpline. We have 14 volunteers as well as all of our support program facilitators. The volunteers donated a total of 3,402 hours from October 2022 through October 2023. We always welcome new volunteers.

**Financial:** See last page for details

**Nominating Committee:** Recruits new board members to be nominated for 2-year terms to ensure a diverse board.

**Legislative Committee:** Legislation is currently handled by our National and State level affiliates.

### **SUPPORT & EDUCATION GROUPS**

**Support Groups:** NAMI-WM sponsors 18 monthly free support groups in various locations throughout Western Massachusetts. Six groups are for families and friends of persons with mental health conditions (one specific for the black/brown community). Twelve groups are for persons who are concerned about their mental health including four specific for the LGBTQIA+ community. Annual meetings are held with the support group facilitators and recommendations are considered for revisions to the virtual vs. in-person schedule.

**Peer-to-Peer Course:** NAMI-WM is planning three Peer-to-Peer courses, beginning the Spring of 2024. This is a free, 8-session educational program for adults with mental health conditions who are looking to better understand themselves and their recovery, taught by NAMI trained leaders with lived experience.

**Family-to-Family Course:** NAMI Family-to-Family is a free, 8-session educational program for family, significant others and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidenced-based program. This means that research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition.

NAMI Family-to-Family is taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there.

## **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

To meet our goal of increasing public awareness of mental health conditions and reducing stigma, NAMI-WM has always had a strong commitment to providing speakers, free of charge, to civic and educational groups upon request. Our board members and volunteers are particularly active as speakers in the Western Massachusetts Community. Some examples of our community outreach are:

**Colleges:** Spoke with 85 AIC students in the nursing program, some specializing in psychology regarding mental health information and resources available in the community. Attended Bay Path College Health Fair, and Westfield State University Health Fair.

**Schools:** We were part of a Question & Answer Panel with 100 Agawam High School students and staff regarding social media and the affects on mental health. We were also invited to St. Mary's Middle School to discuss general mental health awareness and to help educate the 75 staff and students that were present. We shared some guidelines on how to notice if someone is struggling and how to help them or who to notify in case there is a mental health crisis.

**Civic Groups and Service Organizations:** Agawam Senior Center Health Fair as well as a special educational event about Seasonal Affective Disorder and how to recognize. We were at MassMutual for an in-person and virtual event for the employees who were interested in learning more about NAMI and mental health awareness and the resources available to them in the community. We attended the Greenfield Mental Health Fair at Energy Park sponsored by CSO's Green River House. We had an informational table at the 'Lights of Hope' Addiction Awareness Event in Monson. NAMI-WM was invited to collaborate with BHN and their Ware Family Resource Center with two community events geared toward educating and guiding parents of younger children as well as a 'Fun Day' with the kids.

We did a special Q & A project with Meta about NAMI and mental health resources and education.

**Faith Communities:** Attended a Question & Answer informational session at Shiloh SDA church in Springfield that was broadcasted live on Facebook.

**CIT Training:** For three years NAMI-WM had been providing a family perspective and NAMI information to Police Officers, both new cadets and veteran officers, in the Western Massachusetts Community. The free training program about mental health was a 5-day session made available through a grant. The program ended due to the grant funding ending. We were in 17 sessions throughout the years.

### **Services for Children and Adolescents:**

NAMI Basics is a 6-session education program for parents, caregivers and other family who provide care for youth (ages 22 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. This program is free to participants, 99% of whom say they would recommend the program to others. NAMI Basics is available both in person and online through NAMI Basics OnDemand.

### **NAMI Teen & Young Adult HelpLine:**

NAMI is proud to introduce the Teen & Young Adult (T&YA) HelpLine: A free nationwide peer-support service providing information, resource referrals, and support to teens and young adults. The T&YA Specialists are young people who understand what others going through because they have been through stuff, too. They are experienced and well-trained. They care and want to help them find a way forward. They can reach out by phone, text, or chat.

**NAMI Homefront Mental Health Resources for Military Service Members,** Veterans and their families! NAMI offers free online suite of resources for caregivers, family members, and military service members and veterans designed to increase understanding, communication, wellness and advocacy skills. Accessible through computers or mobile devices, NAMI Homefront Mental Health Resources are available 24/7 and includes information about mental health conditions, treatment options, approaches to increase overall wellness, tips for self-care and managing stress, communication strategies, transitioning from military to civilian life, links to helpful organizations and crisis services and more!

**Media:** Another NAMI-WM goal is to increase our public outreach via the media and social. Our

members have been interviewed by, and NAMI-WM related articles appear in; the Springfield Republican, Daily Hampshire Gazette, The Reminder, The Greenfield Recorder, The Westfield News, Turley Publications, Chicopee Herald and The Amherst Bulletin. NAMI-WM members are interviewed by TV Channels 22 & 40, and local radio stations and have appeared on Mass Appeal. NAMI-WM assists several media contacts when there are requests made directly to the office asking for statements regarding National and local mental health news events.

**NAMI-WM Packets:** NAMI-WM mails out informational packets when requested of information about mental health conditions, resources to help the family and consumer regarding relevant issues.

**NAMI-WM MESSENGER:** In 2023 NAMI-WM mailed to over 500 households four issues of its newsletter, *'The Messenger'*, which is written by members and staff then printed and prepared for mailing in our Western Mass office.

### **ADVOCACY**

NAMI-WM has always emphasized its advocacy role, both on behalf of individuals seeking help and in the larger arena of reaching out to service agencies and organizations regarding issues affecting the well-being of all those affected by mental health conditions.

**Individual Advocacy:** Each month NAMI-WM's office receives an average of 100 new (i.e. first time) requests for assistance via phone, walk-ins and emails. Requests come from individual consumers, their family members, friends and many different types of professionals. Staff and select volunteers respond by providing guidance in finding appropriate services, referrals to relevant agencies and people that will; help answer their questions, sending packets of informational literature and then following up as often as necessary until problems can be resolved as satisfactorily as possible. Some rare situations require repeated "problem solving" over months and even years.

**Public Advocacy:** As it becomes apparent that specific problems presented to NAMI-WM by individuals are being experienced more generally, NAMI-WM tries to resolve those issues through lobbying for improvement and change in systems and services to the NAMI National and State affiliates.

NAMI-WM joins forces with local service agencies to help the Western Massachusetts community with several on-going mental health issues. We have members on DMH Advisory Committees, the local clubhouses advisory boards as well as the Culture of Care Committee through Agawam School Department.

### **MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH**

Another goal that NAMI-WM has is to continue to expand our outreach to under-served and culturally diverse communities. We have met with several service agencies in the Springfield and Holyoke communities and are continuing to build bridges in helping educate and bridge the gap of services to these communities. We are expanding our Spanish speaking educational and support programs. NAMI-WM's has our 'Open Your Mind' office brochure translated into Spanish, 'Abra su mente' and added several new pieces of Spanish literature and resources.

### **RESEARCH**

NAMI National's primary role in research is to ensure that people affected by mental illness – both individuals and their families – have access to accurate and timely information regarding symptoms, conditions and treatments. This includes sharing new insights from research in brain science, genetics, treatment options, and other discoveries, as well as advocating for current and future research efforts.

Research is vital to help us understand how mental health conditions develop, how they impact individuals and communities, and how symptoms can be most effectively managed. Mental health often leaves us with a lot of questions – and research is one of the most important ways that we can provide answers. As a result, research is a powerful source of hope for people with mental health conditions and their families. Several NAMI-WM Board members attend the National and State level conventions to ensure that we

know about the most up-to-date research that is available. This is a vital active role as the NAMI organization is constantly changing to meet the needs of the community and how it responds to mental health, crisis and education. We also have monthly meetings with said affiliates in regards to different educational committees including Affiliate Development, Call to Action, Call Helplines, MA DMH Youth and Family Services, and Provider Q&A webinars, these are a few that we attend monthly.

### **NETWORKING**

NAMI-WM believes it is important to communicate and cooperate with other groups and individuals who share our concern for the well-being of persons with mental health conditions and their families. One of the intentional components of our Board of Directors' roles are to establish and maintain a wide range of diverse networking relationships. Several meetings are held with our NAMI State office staff and affiliate representatives. We meet with our Board of Directors and do an annual SWOT analysis and Strategic Planning to determine future plans for the organization. NAMI-WM's Executive Board and staff communicate by email regularly with dozens of interested agencies and individuals who have common ground regarding mental health conditions and questions asked by their consumers. Also, the Executive Board and staff have been participating in meetings with the NAMI National staff with their 'Town Hall' and 'Ask the Doctor' virtual meetings with state and local affiliates across the country.

### **FINANCIAL/FUND RAISING**

**Membership Committee:** Maintains all membership/dues records providing over 400 hours/year.

**Fundraising Committee:** Oversees raising NAMI-WM's annual budget through major gifts, donations, grants, sponsorships, direct appeals and several fundraising projects. (see below)

***NAMI-WM does not receive monies from the Commonwealth or other government agencies, nor hold any contracts with the State.***

**Treasurer:** Responsible for all financial records and transactions.

Because NAMI-WM does not receive monies from State funding sources, it is necessary to find creative ways to sustain our Budget which has grown steadily over the years as our activities have increased and the need is much greater since the pandemic. We depend on membership dues but a portion of each member's dues must go to the NAMI National and State offices. We receive small donations from members including honorariums and memorials as well as larger gifts from friends through appeal letters. NAMI is a member of Charity Navigator and the BBB Wise Giving Alliance Standards and NAMI-WM has been a member of the Community Health Charities since 2002, the Network for Good, GuideStar and Your Cause. Whenever possible, we obtain grants from local sources as well as from our National NAMI office. The major source of budgetary funding comes from our own fundraising events. For several years, NAMI-WM has acknowledged Mental Illness Awareness Week the first week in October by selling silk irises at local business and places of worship, we have recently extended that to include the month of September. As many as 60 of our members at over 15 organizations, participate in our annual Iris Project. During the month of May, Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI-WM holds their annual Walkathon, 'A Journey of Hope and Recovery' to raise money and promote public awareness, which is very successful.

NAMI envisions a world where all people affected by mental health conditions live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a community that cares. *NAMI relies on gifts and contributions to support our important work:*

**Hope:** We believe in the possibility of recovery, wellness and the potential in all of us.

**Inclusion:** We embrace diverse backgrounds, cultures and perspectives.

**Empowerment:** We promote confidence, self-efficacy and service to our mission.

**Compassion:** We practice respect, kindness and empathy.

**Fairness:** We fight for equity and justice.