

I am Jane Ryan and I am chairperson for NAMI-Alger/Marquette (the National Alliance on Mental Illness). We are a local affiliate of the state and national organization. We have been in existence in our area for over 25 years. We and the other Upper Peninsula affiliates are made up of families who have a loved one who is coping with serious mental illness and also persons who have mental illnesses. Advocacy on behalf of those persons is a primary function of our groups throughout the state and the nation.

First I would like to thank the Commission and those responsible for its start-up for being sensitive to the need to take a look at MH services in a broad scope and in a bipartisan fashion. The Governor stated that the task of this commission is to strengthen the state's mental health system and the necessity to do so is evident. The funding and support for needed programs has declined during the past few years even as the numbers who would benefit has increased due in great measure to the economic downturn. NAMI members hope that recommendations coming from the five work groups will be facilitated and funded by the appropriate governmental units.

We must admit to frustration in this regard as in recent years there have been several commissions and studies and reports which quite clearly showed ways in which persons with mental illnesses can be provided with timely and appropriate access to mental health services and treatments which are evidence-based and which can, in the long run, save the state money and at the same time help those who are suffering greatly increased likelihood of regaining their lives back. They showed that providing timely access to services greatly reduces the need for costly emergency medical services and also reduces other governmental costs such as those in the area of corrections (jails and prisons). (Most of you are aware that our jails and prisons now bear many of the responsibilities for treating persons with mental illnesses, many of whom might not be in jail or prison if their symptoms had been recognized and treated in a timely manner.)

Hopefully the five work groups can reprocess some of the information gained in these earlier studies and recommendations, but we feel **STRONGLY** that just learning what would be good to do is **NOT ENOUGH**. The recommendations must be funded and implemented or the commission members' time and the funding devoted to its work have been wasted. These public hearings and work groups must have a greater mission than just allowing us to "vent" and research our concerns. As the mental health code suggests, one of the responsibilities of our state government is to assist the most vulnerable among us in obtaining medical care appropriate to their needs. I note that in the description of these work groups the word "explore" is used over and over again. There seems to be an emphasis on gathering information but few words are used to suggest or hint at what actions might follow. (Workgroup #5's description does mention developing an public education campaign....but it's not at all clear how that would "strengthen the system.")

In general our NAMI affiliate, and others throughout the state, have long advocated for insurance parity for those who have mental illnesses. Michigan is one of very few states that have failed to recognize (through insurance-related legislation) that the brain is a part of the body and that insurance co-pays and lifetime limits on services and such should be no different (no less) for brain illnesses that they are for diseases of the heart, lungs and liver. We support the integration of physical and mental health services that Work Group #3 will be "exploring." Coordinating services can be cost-effective and it can also help the consumer of medical care cope with the complications involved in accessing needed treatment for closely related mind/body issues.

Our local affiliate has been especially interested public safety concerns, a timely topic indeed, and we are glad that there is a work group (#4) devoted to "exploring" issues related to those concerns. We have worked with enforcement staff and criminal justice education staff locally to share concerns that persons have when dealing with the law. Members of our group have participated in trainings to offer, from their personal experiences, ways in which police personnel can de-escalate serious incidents involving persons with mental illnesses. NAMI's national organization encourages law enforcement agencies to adopt the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Model for training teams (including police, judges, EMT's, and others) to respond to crises involving persons with mental illnesses. But the stumbling block has been the fact of reductions in the staff of law enforcement agencies so that sheriffs, police chiefs and others do not feel they can take personnel off the road to attend trainings. Clearly here adequate funding of law enforcement agencies must be a priority with longrange savings justifiably expected.

We also believe that work group #5's mission is an important one. Educating the public about mental illness can have many positive outcomes. When stigma is reduced people are more likely to acknowledge that they or a loved one have a mental health problem and to seek treatment. Also tax-paying citizens can learn how their lives can be impacted in positive ways if persons with mental illnesses are properly treated. For instance, statistics show that an ill person, properly treated, is no more likely to commit a crime than a non ill person. Many persons with serious illnesses can remain or become productive citizens when they receive good care. They can return to school, raise families, hold jobs, and contribute to their communities.

I have touched on a few of the issues that NAMI cares about....and for us, as citizens, to move beyond "exploring" and studying these issues will require action. Much of it is related to funding - adequate funding of community mental health services and services which have connections to those services. We need adequate counseling services in our schools and services for the young, adequate training and staffing for our law enforcement agencies and jails and prisons, and adequate funding for supports in housing. Upfront expenses are daunting, but in almost every arena, when the citizens who are trying to cope with an illness that they would certainly rather not have, received good treatment, in the long haul, tax dollars can be saved.

Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns. We are looking for action!

A Few Suggested Readings

available at Peter White Public Library
Marquette, Michigan

and through inter-library loan and bookstores

Amador, Xavier, "I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help; helping the seriously mentally ill accept treatment;" Vida Press, 2nd edition, 2007

Bellenir, Karen, "Mental Health Information for Teens," Omnigraphics, 2001

Capps, Donald, "Understanding Psychosis," 2010

Earley, Peter, "Crazy: A Father's Search Through America's Mental Health Madness," 2006

Jamison, Kay, "Touched with Fire: manic-depressive illness and the artistic temperament," 1998

Karp, David, "The Burden of Sympathy: how families cope with mental illness," 2001

Torrey, E. Fuller, "Surviving Schizophrenia," Harper and Row, 5th edition, 2006

Warner, Judith, "We've Got Issues," for families of children with mental and emotional issues., 2010

Wood, Jeffrey, PSY.D., "Getting Help: The Complete and Authoritative Guide to Self-assessment & Treatment of Mental Health Problems," 2007

Additional Resources

local website: namiam.org

NAMI Michigan

921 N. Washington, Lansing, MI 48906
(517) 485-4049 or 1-800-331-4264
Website: <http://www.namimi.org>

National Alliance on Mental Illness
Helpline (800) 950-NAMI (6264)
Website: <http://www.nami.org>

Some comments from past NAMI
program participants:

"I never thought of myself as a
"group" person,
but I got a lot out of listening
to others and learning from
their experiences."

"I felt like I was the only one having
to deal with these kinds of problems,
and then I discovered there were
others going through the same pain."

"It was wonderful to be in a group
of people who understood without
me having to explain everything."

"It helps a lot to be with people...
to discuss things...not to just
read about these illnesses."

If you know anyone you think might
benefit from NAMI's programs,
please share this information.

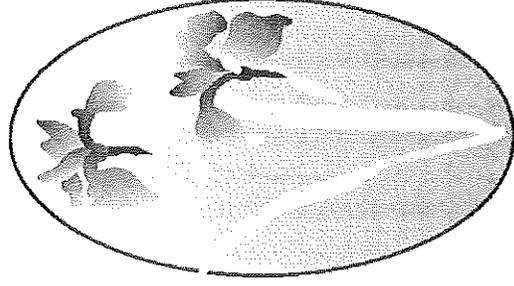
"You Are Not Alone"



SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND / OR THEIR FAMILIES

affiliated with
National Alliance on Mental Illness
&
NAMI Michigan

* **SUPPORT**
* **EDUCATION**
* **ADVOCACY**
* **RESEARCH**



Our Purposes

- * To provide social and psychological support to those affected by mental illnesses/biological brain disorders and their families and friends.
- * To work toward improving the quality of life for individuals with mental illness.
- * To educate the public to dispel myths and overcome the stigma associated with biological brain disorders/mental illness.
- * To advocate for/with people with mental illness and their families at local, state and national levels.
- * To work with providers of services to persons with mental illnesses. To identify professionals willing to work with consumers and their families as team members.
- * To support community services in housing, income maintenance, day programs, and social networks for persons with mental illnesses.
- * To promote research on physiological, neurological, biochemical and genetic aspects of mental illness.
- * To be a part of the growing recovery movement.

What is NAMI?

"The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness"
 The National Alliance on Mental Illness is a national organization begun in 1979 to assist families coping with mental illness of family members

NAMI-Alger/Marquette Family Support Group was organized in 1988 to meet the special needs of consumers and families coping with mental illness. You are invited to join this fellowship. Formal membership is not required. You are welcome to participate without cost or obligation. You may wish to join the local, state and national alliances, for which dues are currently \$35 total per family per year. Or you may wish an Open Door membership for \$3. Membership includes subscriptions to the award-winning news magazine, The Advocate, and state and local newsletters, access to information, as well as supporting the organization.

NAMI members are volunteers who share their knowledge and experiences, but this is not to be considered the same as professional advice or treatment. Appropriate professionals should be consulted as needed.

Our Programs

- To provide a comfortable, nonthreatening opportunity to share common experiences.
- To provide information on mental health resources to persons with mental illness and their families.
- To provide current information via guest speakers and discussion.
- To establish friends and support networks that can provide help in time of crisis.
- To offer the "Family-2-Family" program / Workshop, a 12-week program to help families and consumers develop skills for supporting and assisting ill members and their families.
- To offer the "HUGS" Program / Workshop to help families with children and adolescents with mental illness develop skills as in the FIA Program.
- To offer IOOV (In Our Own Voice), a recovery education program — presented by consumers.
- To offer Connections Support Group, a peer-based group for those working on recovery from mental illnesses.

Confidentiality is Respected

NAMI-Alger/Marquette meets twice monthly in the evenings 7-9 p.m. - usually the second and last Mondays of the month.

(June, July, August meetings are last Monday only.)
 129 West Baraga St., The Non Profit Commons
 in Marquette

Times, dates and locations may change from time to time, so call MGH Education/Conference Center (906) 225-3470 to confirm.

M - F 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

() I am interested in NAMI and would like additional information. Please contact me by mail or telephone.

() I would like a free copy of "Mental Illness: A Family Resource Guide", published by the State Alliance on Mental Illness of Michigan.

Name _____
 Address _____

Optional:

Phone _____
 E-mail _____

Mail inquiries, dues or donations to:

NAMI-Alger Marquette
 P.O. Box 262
 Marquette, MI 49855

For further information and referral to a NAMI member call: Marquette General Hospital Education/Conference Center (906) 225-3470
 Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

or at other times
 Pathways Community Mental Health
 1-888-728-4929

NAMI-Alger/Marquette is supported by dues and fundraising activities and helped by local agencies. Any financial support is greatly appreciated and donations may be sent to the address above.
