



Multiple mental health bills signed into law, including funding for 988

Governor John Carney signed into law three bills on August 16 that increase mental health resources for students and improve access to behavioral health care. The legislation strengthens the State's mental and behavioral health services to identify, support, and help students both inside and outside of the classroom.

"My highest priority is making sure we give students everything they need to be successful," said Gov. Carney. "This package of legislation strengthens our mental and behavioral health services so that we can identify, support, and help students in and out of the classroom. I want to thank Speaker Longhurst and the members of the Delaware General Assembly for their advocacy and hard work on behalf of our students."

House Bill 3, House Bill 4, and a substitute for House Bill 160 will increase mental health resources for students and help more Delawareans access behavioral health care in their time of need.

HB 3 will help students prioritize their mental health by providing them with excused absences for mental or behavioral health reasons. This measure requires that any student taking more than two of these excused absences be referred to a school-based mental or behavioral health specialist.

HB 4 will ensure that students have access to behavioral health support in their schools in the aftermath of a school-connected traumatic event, defined as the death of any student, educator, administrator, or other building employee of a public school, or other traumatic event that affects a significant portion of the students of the school.

HB 160 will create a dedicated funding source for the State's new 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and a 20-member board that will develop a comprehensive statewide crisis intervention services plan and recommend to the Governor and General Assembly how to use the money from the surcharge.

NAMI Chief Advocacy Officer Hannah Wesolowski said that the funding established in HB 160 for 988 and crisis response is really groundbreaking.

"By setting a 988 fee that is equal to the State's 911 fee, Delaware residents are saying that mental health is just as important as physical health," she said. "Delaware is the first state to achieve this kind of parity, and I applaud NAMI Delaware's leadership in guiding this through the state legislature."

Register for the annual conference

Inspiring Hope mental health conference slated for October 5

Mental health advocates and supporters will gather this fall at the State's premier mental health event, the Inspiring Hope conference from NAMI Delaware. It will take place Thursday, October 5, at Clayton Hall at the University of Delaware in Newark. **See page 4 for more details.**



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– NAMI Chief Advocacy Officer Hannah Wesolowski

NAMI Delaware honors Latino culture and contributions

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

NAMI Delaware joins the commemoration by raising awareness of the mental health concerns the Latino community. Our bilingual and bicultural team members are available to assist the community with Spanish-language resources. Visit www.namidelaware.org/espanol.

Nationally, the National Institute of Mental Health reports that when it comes to mental health research, Latino youth have been woefully understudied, but the research suggests a real cause for concern.

Evidence indicates that Latino youth and their families have pressing mental health needs and are not receiving adequate mental health care. The dramatically unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further disproportionately affected youth from minority communities and exacerbated these disparities. Barriers—including stigma, racism, and lack of cultural understanding as well as cost and insurance coverage—may make it difficult for Latino youth to access mental health care.

By supporting culturally responsive research that engages families and communities, we hope to push the field forward to address the pressing mental health needs of Hispanic and Latino youth.

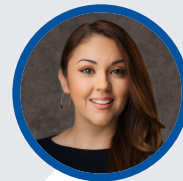
NAMI facts about Latinos and mental health

- More than 50% of Latino young adults ages 18-25 with serious mental illness may not receive treatment. This inequality puts these communities at a higher risk for more severe and persistent forms of mental health conditions, because without treatment, mental health conditions often worsen.
- 35.1% of Latino adults with mental illness receive treatment each year compared to the U.S. average of 46.2%. This is due to many unique barriers to care.
- 17.0% of Latinos in the U.S. live in poverty (compared to 8.2% of non-Hispanic whites). Individuals who live in poverty have a higher risk of mental illness and, conversely, individuals with mental illness have a higher risk of living in poverty.

A special thanks to our bilingual staff



Andreina Cerrato,
Operations Coordinator



Jacqueline Contreras,
Southern Delaware Coordinator

NAMI Welcomes Dr. Doug Ferguson, New COO

The NAMI Delaware team is pleased to welcome Dr. Doug Ferguson as its first Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, leading policy, strategy and fundraising to secure NAMI Delaware's future and strengthen its operations.

"We are excited to have Doug join our leadership team and play a vital role in NAMI Delaware's continued growth and future plans," said Dr. Joshua Thomas, CEO and Executive Director. "His background and experience make him an excellent fit to support and lead our organization for the benefit of our clients and members."

Doug, whose career includes extensive experience in nonprofit management, higher education and working with volunteer organizations, said he was eager to get started with NAMI Delaware.

As COO, Doug will oversee government relations and policy and run NAMI Delaware's day-to-day operations, including grants and contracts, housing programs, human resources and event logistics.

Doug was most recently Director of Development at Delaware County Community College in Pennsylvania, handling fundraising, donor stewardship, events and more. He also previously served as Director of Alumni Programs and Foundation Events. Before joining DCCC, he was Vice President of Operations and Director of Programs at the Association of Educational Publishers as well as Assistant Director of Alumni Relations at Widener University.

Doug holds a Doctorate in educational leadership, a Master's in public administration and a Bachelor's in communications, all from Widener University.



"There's no organization that's quite like NAMI Delaware anywhere in the country," Dr. Ferguson said. "I'm ready to start working for people who need help and their families so that everyone has a chance to lead their best life."

Inspiring Hope mental health conference slated for October 5

Mental health advocates and supporters will gather this fall at the State's premier mental health event, the Inspiring Hope conference from NAMI Delaware. It will take place Thursday, October 5, at Clayton Hall at the University of Delaware in Newark.

Attendees are welcomed to learn about the newest research into mental health and mental illness, make connections with other people and organizations, discover resources in the community, and strengthen their advocacy skills, said Dr. Joshua Thomas, CEO and Executive Director of NAMI Delaware.

"We bring together the mental health community to strengthen the bonds that unite us and fight the stigma that reduces us," he added. "Inspiring Hope is always an inspiring event, and we welcome everyone to be part of the experience."

Keynote speakers Michael Jann and Michele Jourdan and producers of "Our Turn to Talk" will be sharing their stories and experiences about living with mental illness and supporting loved ones who live with mental health conditions.

Michael Jann is an Emmy-nominated comedy writer for The Tonight Show and wife Michele Jourdan is his writing partner and a gold medal-winning bodybuilder. Their son, Max, is in recovery, and his experience spurred their fight against the stigma of mental illness. They are the creators of "Bug Therapy," an animated short film with an all-star cast that uses humor to address the topic.

The film and podcast series "Our Turn to Talk" lets teenagers and young people tell their stories, unfiltered, with the message that storytelling saves lives. They recount the impacts of racism, social media, anxiety and depression to showcase their struggles and triumphs.



Sponsorship opportunities are available at a variety of levels, from the exclusive Presenting sponsor to a Standard sponsorship. Contact Dr. Doug Ferguson at dferguson@namide.org to arrange your sponsorship.



For more information and to register, visit namidelaware.org/conference.



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Your support helped us shine as national leaders.

NAMI Delaware was recently recognized as the nation's top chapter for its outreach, advocacy and education. Thank you for making all this happen.



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