

## NAMI Delaware's 2024 Advocacy Priorities

NAMI Delaware understands reaching and sustaining recovery from mental illness requires overcoming the barriers that exist in Delaware, including:



- Insufficient spectrum of services that are disjointed and operate in silos
- Lack of community awareness of resources and services available
- Workforce shortages of provider, prescriber, and treatment professionals
- Lack of facilities and services offering admission to individuals with complex needs
- Delay in access to beds may result in extensive wait time in ERs or being sent home
- Challenges with transition from youth to adult services
- Limited crisis services, transport, and response options
- Underrepresented populations lack culturally competent providers
- Limited access to safe, affordable housing for individuals with mental illness

# Priorities:

## **PRIORITY 1: Access to Effective and Appropriate Treatment**

People with mental illness should have timely access to clinically appropriate medications and evidence-based treatments.

## **PRIORITY 2: Timely, Appropriate Crisis Services**

Individuals experiencing mental health crises deserve access to timely, competent, and compassionate medical care during a psychiatric emergency.

## **PRIORITY 3: Partnership without Reliance on Law Enforcement**

Systems for community mental health and crisis response should provide equitable access and quality across the continuum of care, removing reliance on the criminal justice system.

## **PRIORITY 4: Family Involvement in Treatment**

Family members are a central resource in the treatment of children and adults living with serious mental illnesses and should be an integral part of facilitating mutually agreed upon treatment team goals, using their unique knowledge of and relationship with the individual to create better outcomes.

## **PRIORITY 5: Array of Services and Supports for All Ages**

Youth and adults living with mental illness should have access to an array of culturally competent treatment, services, and supports that include evidence-based interventions and promote resiliency and recovery.

## **PRIORITY 1: Access to Effective and Appropriate Treatment**

People with mental illness should have timely access to clinically appropriate medications and evidence-based treatments.

- Ensure multiple points of access to mental health treatment and address the disconnect between points of treatment and services to provide a more complete continuum of care for individuals experiencing mental illness
- Support development of strategies and resources to assist community members with navigating the complex treatment system. This includes tools and information to find appropriate support for early intervention, pre-crisis, ongoing recovery, crisis, and post-crisis
- Advocate for policies to address workforce shortages in providers, prescribers, and treatment professionals, such as incentives like loan forgiveness and higher rates of compensation and reimbursement
- Advocate for diversity and cultural humility in the workforce and increased access to services offered in languages other than English, including ASL (American Sign Language)
- Increase funding for community awareness about mental illness, stigma, treatment and resources
- Address existing legislation concerning involuntary mental health treatment to clarify process and ensure it is comprehensive and consistent

# Priorities:

## **PRIORITY 2:** **Timely, Appropriate Crisis Services**

Individuals experiencing mental health crises deserve access to timely, competent, and compassionate medical care during a psychiatric emergency.



- Support the development of a comprehensive plan for 988 Implementation in Delaware in partnership with [national](#) and state policy leaders
- Advocate for more accessible, responsive community-based crisis intervention and crisis stabilization facilities
- Increase funding to the State's crisis teams to be available 24/7 and ensure that all county teams have the capacity to respond in person whenever needed
- Encourage partnerships between hospitals, health systems, counties, law enforcement, families and individuals to maintain strong communication, maximize capacity, provide the best possible care, and develop more comprehensive services

# Priorities:

## PRIORITY 3:

### Partnership without Reliance on Law Enforcement

Systems for community mental health and crisis response should provide equitable access and quality across the continuum of care, removing reliance on the criminal justice system

- Support a variety of approaches to divert people with serious mental illness from unnecessary incarceration and into programs designed to address their treatment and service needs
- Educate those involved at all levels of the judicial and legal systems – including judges, lawyers, police officers, correctional officers, and emergency medical personnel among others – about serious mental illnesses and de-escalation strategies
- Enhance existing CIT programming to include other professionals such as crisis communications personnel
- Improve collaboration between mental health authorities and correctional and law enforcement agencies to develop strategies and programs for compassionate intervention
- Advocate for adequate funding to provide effective, accessible transport alternatives for individuals experiencing mental health crises to eliminate use of law enforcement when laws have not been violated
- Advocate for more law enforcement agencies to implement co-response models like

- Behavioral Health Units that prioritize the response from mental health professionals in partnership with law enforcement
- Require mandatory basic mental health education in all academy training and regularly after academy graduation
- Support accessible, comprehensive re-entry programs to ensure adequate health coverage, community mental health care, and support resources and education



# Priorities:

## PRIORITY 4: Family Involvement in Treatment

Family members are a central resource in the treatment of children and adults living with serious mental illnesses and should be an integral part of facilitating mutually agreed-upon treatment team goals, using their unique knowledge of and relationship with the individual to create better outcomes.



- Promote a client- and family-centered approach that gives the individual encouragement to participate fully in planning, monitoring, and evaluating treatment; and gives the family the information, skills, and support to make informed decisions as equal partners in treatment (provided the individual wants their family to be engaged in the process)
- Ensure that families of children living with serious mental illness can easily access mental health and related services for their child without being required to navigate multiple, complex, and overly bureaucratic systems
- Support development of policies that ensure loved ones have an opportunity to provide perspective and information to treatment teams
- Advocate for Delaware to offer and support a system of Advance Care Directive or Psychiatric Advance Directive

# Priorities:

## **PRIORITY 5:** **Array of Services and Supports for All Ages**

Youth and adults living with mental illness should have access to an array of culturally competent treatment, services, and supports that include evidence-based interventions and promote resiliency and recovery.

- Promote policies that help encourage prevention and identify signs of mental health issues in children early, intervene with clinically approved services, and prevent mental illness from going undiagnosed
- Ensure that treatment facilities and providers offer admissions and services in a timely, equitable manner for all individuals, including those living with complex needs
- Align the transition between children's services and adult services and advocate for community awareness and resources for families
- Encourage schools to maintain close connections with community mental health and primary health care systems
- Support the development of a new facility for the Delaware Psychiatric Center (State Hospital)
- Support development of state-funded evidence based models for peer centers (i.e. Clubhouse International Model)
- Advocate for dignified housing options for people living with mental illness to support recovery

