

# NAMI DELAWARE NEWSLETTER

Summer | 2025



SUMMER EDITION  
2025

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[www.namidelaware.org](http://www.namidelaware.org) | 302-427-0787  
2400 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Wilmington, DE 19805





## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friends,

Over the past several months, I've had the honor of stepping into the role of CEO at NAMI Delaware. It's been an exciting and humbling experience to join this team at such a pivotal moment. We are in a period of growth, change, and a deep recommitment to the work ahead.

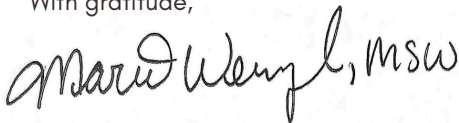
At NAMI Delaware, we know that lived experience is powerful. We believe in the strength of community, and we know that change is possible when we work together. Whether you're living with a mental health condition, supporting a loved one, or advocating for better systems, you are part of this movement. We're here for you.

In just a few months, we've seen some incredible wins: the passage of DJ's Act, a record turnout at NAMIWalks, and growing momentum across the state in our advocacy and outreach. Looking ahead, I'm focused on building a more connected and responsive NAMI Delaware. That means we are listening deeply, showing up boldly, and creating space for people to be seen, heard, and supported.

We're working on making our office more welcoming, reimagining the volunteer experience, and ensuring that people with lived experience continue to guide everything we do. From programming to policy, this work is about more than services. It's about dignity, belonging, and building a future where mental wellness is a right, not a privilege.

Thank you for believing in us. Thank you for standing with us. Together, we're creating something powerful, and I'm so grateful to be on this journey with you.

With gratitude,



Marie Wenzel  
Chief Executive Officer  
NAMI Delaware



## NEW STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

*This year we welcome:*

Staff: Shantasia Black, LaRonda Brooks Agnew, Al Comer, Jenny Graham, Erin Heilig, Amayah Israel, Mariann Kenville-Moore and Edna Kpota

Board: Harold Bozeman, Joe Manfre, Mikelle Morris, and Elizabeth Schlecker





## Our appreciation to these board members who retired this past year

Mary Berger was one of the longest-serving members of the NAMI Delaware Board, having joined in 2006 and stepping into the role of Board President in 2013. In 2013, she was instrumental in hiring Josh Thomas, who served as NAMI Delaware's Executive Director for over 10 years in an exemplary role. Mary and Josh partnered to expand NAMI Delaware's services and funding.

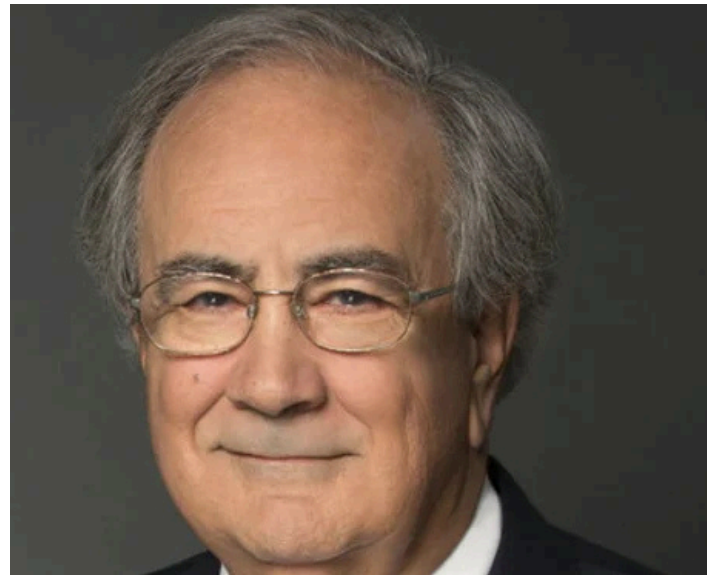
Her dedication to NAMI's mission never wavered. Mary provided steady leadership and unceasing support to NAMI Delaware and its staff, particularly during challenging periods of transition. Without hesitation, she devoted countless hours to the organization. Mary Berger spent significant time at the NAMI office—all while managing a demanding leadership role at the University of Pennsylvania and caring for her family.



Ed McNally has been a member of the Board of Directors and Secretary for nearly two decades. In 2023, Ed celebrated 40 years of volunteering with NAMI DE and was recognized for his service during the Inspiring Hope conference.

Ed has always been a strong champion of the NAMI DE Housing Program; his genuine caring and compassion for the residents of the housing program and the support of the NAMI DE Housing Program staff have been the key to the success of the program as it grew over the years.

Ed's legal expertise and financial expertise, as well as his attention to detail, have been invaluable in all things related to NAMI DE. Ed is proud to have worked with amazing staff and board members to expand the outreach and enhance the reputation of NAMI DE.





## Staff Spotlight

Mert Briggs is celebrating an incredible milestone — 25 years with NAMI Delaware! In true Mert fashion, he chose to mark the occasion by inviting his coworkers to join him for an adventurous day at Go Ape. We are so grateful for Mert's dedication, humor, and heart over the years, and we love celebrating this achievement together. Here's to many more years of making a difference, Mert!




On July 22, Marie Wenzel joined the youth-led DE-Stress 302 podcast to share insights on mental health — and managed to keep the stress levels at zero.

In this engaging conversation with host Alena Duggan, Marie covered important topics like breaking stigma, supporting mental wellness, and connecting people with resources — all while adding a few lighthearted moments along the way.

About DE-Stress 302:

DE-Stress 302 is where conversations lead to solutions. Each episode explores the mental health topics that matter most in Delaware, featuring expert insights, personal experiences, local resources, and practical tools for caring for your mind and body. Whether you're seeking support, curious about wellness, or just need to know you're not alone — this podcast is for you.

Brought to you by The 988 Lifeline and The CAUSE, DE-Stress 302 helps build community, break stigma, and promote healing — one conversation at a time.

**HAPPY**  
**25th**  
**YEAR WITH**  
 **NAMI Delaware**

### Merton Briggs

NAMI Delaware is so grateful to have such a dedicated and passionate staff. Our Director of Facilities, Merton Briggs, exemplifies this! Thank you for 25 years of service to our mission of helping and advocating for Delawareans affected by mental illness.



To watch the podcast: <http://bit.ly/4onTPVU>



# STEPPING FORWARD, TOGETHER: NAMIWALKS 2025

*Ending the stigma - one voice at a time*

- 244 registered; 173 Walkers
- 32 Teams
- 93 Total team members
- \$54,892.91 raised
- 21 Community sponsors + 3 vendors
- Miss Delaware 2023, Noa Mills, as Emcee
- Entertainment: Kenny Vanella + Dominique Forehand
- Speakers: NAMI volunteer: Deb Francis, Jim Trojan and Board Chairman, Aaron Mitchell



*NAMI Delaware would like to highlight the following special teams and individuals for your great accomplishments:*

- Largest Team: Zeta Phi Beta, Epsilon Rho Zeta Chapter (raised: \$1,624.91)
- Highest Fundraising Team: Siebold/Melton (raised: \$3,770.00)
- Highest Fundraiser: Erin Heilig (raised: \$7,020.00)



## SPECIAL THANKS:

**Silver Sponsors: Ameriprise Financial Services | CSC Global | Neurocrine Biosciences | Teva**

AmeriHealth Caritas | Bowling Business Strategies | Brandywine Counseling & Community Services, Inc. | Delaware C.O.P.S. | Disability Rights Delaware/ CLASI | Dover Behavioral Health System | DSAMH | Lank, Johnson & Tull, CPAs | Morris James | OCD Delaware | Old Town Hall Associates LLC | Radius Rx Direct and Fulcrum Pharmacy | ShatterProof | Siebold/Melton Team | SUN Behavioral Delaware | Wilmington University | WSFS CARES Foundation | Your Part-Time Controller LLC





# WAYS TO SUPPORT NAMI DELAWARE

## YOUR SUPPORT CHANGES LIVES IN DELAWARE ❤️

Every day, NAMI Delaware provides free programs, support, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by mental illness. We rely on community generosity to make this possible — and there are many ways you can give.

### Ways to Give

#### Direct Gifts

- One-Time Gift – Make a difference today with a single contribution.
  - Donation website: <https://live.givebutter.com/c/qAI5SF>
  - Donation envelope (enclosed)
- Monthly Giving – Become a Sustainer of Hope and provide steady support all year long.
- Payroll Deduction – Check with your employer about automatic giving through your paycheck.
- Stock or Securities – Donate appreciated assets for maximum impact and potential tax benefits.
- Donor Advised Fund (DAF) – Recommend a gift to NAMI Delaware from your DAF.
- Planned Giving – Leave a legacy of hope in your will, trust, or beneficiary designations.



#### Accepted Payment Methods

- Check • Cash • Credit/Debit Card • PayPal • Online Bank Transfer

#### Third-Party & Fundraising Opportunities

- Peer-to-Peer Fundraising – Rally friends and family to support NAMI Delaware in your honor.
- Facebook Fundraisers – Turn your birthday or special occasion into a fundraiser.
- Special Events – Participate in events like NAMIWalks Delaware and other community fundraisers.

Give today at [namidelaware.org/donate](https://namidelaware.org/donate) or call 302-427-0787 ext. 125 for more information.

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## JOIN NAMI DELAWARE — MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Becoming a NAMI member connects you to a powerful statewide and national network of advocates, educators, and supporters.

#### Membership Benefits Include:

- Subscription to the award-winning NAMI Advocate magazine
- Members-only content on [nami.org](https://nami.org)
- Discounts for our annual conference and select events
- The satisfaction of knowing you're helping build better lives for Delawareans affected by mental illness

#### Annual Membership Levels:

- \$60 Household (includes all members in your household)
- \$40 Individual
- \$5 Open Door (for those with limited income)

Join or renew at [namidelaware.org/membership](https://namidelaware.org/membership) and be part of the movement for mental health for all.



## PATHWAYS TO HOPE ART CONTEST

On July 26<sup>th</sup>, NAMI DE hosted its 1<sup>st</sup> Pathways to Hope Art Contest and Exhibit. 14 Artists showcased work whose art reflects the theme: *Light in the Darkness: Faith and Mental Health Through Art!* Great thanks to our host, Red Clay Creek Church, as we celebrate these incredibly talented artists. The Best of Show was won by Ashley Hein and her piece titled "Her Monsters." Read more on our site: [namidelaware.org/](http://namidelaware.org/)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### PATHWAYS TO HOPE INTERFAITH CONFERENCE

On August 22-23, NAMI DE will host its 1<sup>st</sup> Interfaith Conference: Pathways to Hope. Here we will have a General Session provided by select speakers from NAMI National, followed by local faith leaders, who will provide our community a deep look at mental illness through the lens of faith. Please join us from 8:30 AM – 4 PM at the Westminster Presbyterian Church. To register: <https://events.nami.org/pathways25>



## INSPIRING HOPE 2025 CONFERENCE

On October 16th, NAMI DE will host our largest annual conference – Inspiring Hope 2025: Flipping the Script on Mental Illness. Royal Prime Events at Bally's of Dover, 1131 N. DuPont Highway, Dover, DE

To register or to learn more, please go to: [www.namidelaware.org/iConference25](http://www.namidelaware.org/iConference25)



### CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Crisis Response and Intervention
- Children and Young Adults Mental Health
- Veterans Mental Health
- Advocacy
- Wellness
- Dual Diagnosis
- Multicultural Disparities in Mental Health

## CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM TRAINING

NAMI Delaware has played a crucial role in implementing CIT programs statewide. These programs foster collaboration between law enforcement, mental health professionals, and community members to improve responses to mental health crises. Since 2014, over 750 Delaware officers have completed CIT training, which encompasses:

- De-escalation techniques
- Suicide intervention strategies
- Understanding psychiatric medications
- Recognizing cognitive and developmental disabilities
- Addressing children's mental health issues

Upcoming training sessions include:

- Standard CIT Training:  
September 22-26, 2025
- Veterans Response Team (VRT) Training:  
October 14-15, 2025

For more information or to register, visit NAMI Delaware's Law Enforcement & Frontline Professionals page:  
<https://www.namidelaware.org/leos/>



## NAMI DELAWARE BY THE NUMBERS

***Did you know that NAMI DE provides Housing for those suffering with severe and persistent mental illness?***

### HOUSING STATS

- 75 homes; 173 total rooms
- 157 occupants
- 81 male
- 76 female
- 49 senior citizens
- 68 Medicare/Medicaid recipients
- 29 years is the longest span a resident has spent with us to date

### JOIN US FOR A DAY OF CARING

Make a hands-on difference in the lives of those we serve by volunteering at NAMI Delaware's residential properties.

Corporate teams are invited to spend the day cleaning, landscaping, painting, and revitalizing our NAMI Houses, helping create safe, welcoming spaces for residents living with mental illness. It is a meaningful way to build team spirit, give back to the community, and earn volunteer hours that may qualify for your company's donation match.

<https://www.namidelaware.org/volunteer-application>





## WHO WE SERVE (JAN-JUL 2025)

- 195 Meetings with community organizations
- 1 Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training
- 4 Mental Health First Aid training
- 3 Crisis Intervention Training
- 2 Advanced Crisis Intervention Training
- 26 Tabling events/community awareness
- 1 Roundtable event
- 2 Self-care/Burnout presentations
- 14 Custom presentations
- 3 NAMI DE in the Community presentations
- 7 Mental Health and Suicide Prevention presentations
- 1 LGBTQIA+ Presentation
- 3 Law Enforcement/Public Safety presentations
- 1 NAMI Smarts Advocacy training
- 2 In Our Own Voices presentation
- 14 Family and Loved Ones support groups
- 10 Connection Peer support groups
- 4 NAMI in the Lobby days – Sun Behavioral
- 181 Helpline calls and people served
- 30.94 Helpline call hours provided

**3637 total people served**



## NAMI DELAWARE BY THE NUMBERS

### DELAWARE FACTS

Delaware is facing a mental health crisis. Each year, 165,000 adults — 1 in 5 — experience a mental illness, and 42,000 live with a serious mental illness. More than 37,000 adults and 10,000 adolescents have serious thoughts of suicide, and 130 lives were lost to suicide in 2022. Over 220,000 residents live in communities without enough mental health professionals, and more than 53,000 adults reported needing but not receiving treatment, often due to cost. Access to care must improve — lives depend on it.


## SUPPORT GROUPS + WHERE TO FIND US

- Connection Recovery Support Groups (virtual) – 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday monthly. 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM
- Family Support Group (virtual) – 1st Monday & 2nd Thursday monthly, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM (registration required)
- Family Support Group (in-person) – 3rd Wednesday monthly, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Lewes Presbyterian Church, 133 Kings Highway, Lewes, (no registration required)



## DJ'S ALLIANCE ACT

We're thrilled to celebrate a major policy victory: the unanimous passage of House Bill 54, known as DJ's Act. Now it only awaits the Governor's signature! This historic legislation wishes to establish the Office of Suicide Prevention in Delaware—a vital step towards a coordinated, data-driven, and compassionate statewide response to suicide prevention. Thank you to every advocate who raised their voice in support! Keep it going!



**DJ's Act**  
DJ's Alliance

We are honored beyond words to see the amendment naming HB54 - DJ's Act - in honor of the kiddos (and community) that inspired the creation of DJ's Alliance as they uniquely & bravely started their grief journeys after the loss of their father to suicide.

HB54 seeks to establish an Office of Suicide Prevention in Delaware.

# PROTECT Medicaid. Mental Health.



## ADVOCACY

### PROTECT MEDICAID

Join our movement. Visit our action center to sign up for alerts, contact your policymakers, and share your story. When we speak with a united voice, we cannot be ignored — and your voice adds to our power.

[www.nami.org/advocacy](http://www.nami.org/advocacy)

## Bills from the 119th Congress Supported by NAMI

NAMI is a non-profit, non-partisan organization. NAMI supports legislation that would help people with mental health conditions and their families. Listed are bills that NAMI supports in the 119th Congress.

<https://nami.quorum.us/federalpolicy/>

## Bills NAMI Supports in the 119th

h by title...



Bill	Date Introduced	Primary Sponsor	Cosponsors List
H.R. 3757: Pride in Mental Health Act of 2025	06/05/2025	Rep. Sharice Davids (D-KS-3)	Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA-39), Rep. Raja ...
H.R. 3743: Supporting Healthy Mothers and Infants Act of 2025	06/04/2025	Rep. Eugene Vindman (D-VA-7)	Rep. Zach Nunn (R-IA-3), Rep. Glenn "G.T." ...
H.R. 3689: TREAT Youth Act	06/03/2025	Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV-3)	Rep. Jen Kiggans (R-VA-2)
S. 1924: Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act	06/02/2025	Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA)	Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ)
H.R. 3624: Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act	05/29/2025	Rep. Lou Correa (D-CA-46)	Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE-2), Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA-...
H.R. 3658: 911 Community Crisis Responders Act of 2025	05/29/2025	Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA-9)	Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1), Rep. Ro Khanna ...
H.R. 3621: Public Safety and Mental Health Reporting Act	05/29/2025	Rep. Wesley Bell (D-MO-1)	Rep. Cleo Fields (D-LA-6), Rep. Yassamin Ansari (D-...
H.R. 3655: STAR Plus Scholarship Act	05/29/2025	Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-OR-6)	Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA-26), Rep. Paul Tonko...
H.R. 3601: National ACERT Grant Program Authorization Act	05/23/2025	Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH-1)	Rep. John Rutherford (R-FL-5), Rep. Brian ...
S. 1878: ATTAIN Mental Health Act	05/22/2025	Sen. Deb Fischer (R-NV)	Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN)



# NAMI Legislative Updates

## White House Executive Order on Homelessness

On July 24, the White House issued an Executive Order, “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets,” directing federal agencies to expand the use of involuntary treatment for people with serious mental illness as part of efforts to address homelessness. While tackling homelessness is urgent, the order’s emphasis on institutionalization over proven solutions raises serious concerns for NAMI.

Because civil commitment laws are set at the state level, the order cannot directly change them, but it may influence state and local discussions on expanding commitment criteria and criminalizing homelessness. The order:

- Directs DOJ, HHS, HUD, and the Department of Transportation to incentivize expanded use of civil commitment.
- Requires the Attorney General to review consent decrees that limit confinement and could terminate them.
- Prioritizes federal grants for states enforcing laws that criminalize homelessness.
- Supports clearing encampments and ends promotion of the “housing first” model, favoring less effective approaches.

NAMI notes that the order provides no new resources for inpatient or community mental health services. Most states already use the “danger to self or others” standard, and many include “grave disability,” but care remains limited. Criminalization of homelessness has increased, especially after the 2024 Supreme Court decision in *Grants Pass v. Johnson*. Cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and SAMHSA funding will worsen the crisis. While the order mentions issues like forensic bed shortages, competency to stand trial, diversion courts, and crisis services, it offers no concrete actions. NAMI urges the Administration to focus on evidence-based strategies, including:

- Restoring Medicaid coverage and eliminating the IMD Exclusion to increase inpatient capacity.
- Expanding supportive housing and housing first programs.
- Funding early intervention and community mental health services.

NAMI will continue to advocate for solutions like the Treatment and Homelessness Housing Integration Act (HR 577), the Increasing Behavioral Health Treatment Act (HR 4022), and the Michelle Alyssa Go Act, and to ensure people with lived experience are included in decision-making.

## Legislative Soundbites

Here are some headlines you should look into further:

- The Federal cuts to school-based mental health grants, part of a \$1B program under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, have deeply affected rural districts, leaving many without counselors or social workers.

## Delaware in the Spotlight

- The Delaware Police Diversion Team, in partnership with social workers and peer recovery specialists, is implementing a trauma-informed alternative response model. The aim is to offer treatment, rather than arrest, for low-level offenses and mental health crises.
- The Delaware Children’s and Adult Mental Health units have partnered to implement a statewide First Episode Psychosis (FEP) program using the evidence-based NAVIGATE model. This coordinated intervention supports youth and young adults experiencing early signs of psychosis. The program is currently operated under a state contract held by Catholic Charities of Wilmington, ensuring continuity of care across the adolescent and adult systems.

NAMI Delaware  
National Alliance on Mental Illness in Delaware  
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NAMI Delaware HelpLine 888-427-2643

Visit us on the web at [www.namidelaware.org](http://www.namidelaware.org)



INSPIRING HOPE CONFERENCE



**Registration is now open for the 2025 Inspiring Hope Conference**

**Keynote Speaker: Tamika Tremaglio**

October 16, 2025

Royal Prime Events at Bally's of Dover  
1131 N. DuPont Highway, Dover, DE

[www.namidelaware.org/ihconference25](http://www.namidelaware.org/ihconference25)



The Inspiring Hope Conference is more than an event; it's a movement.

Open to mental health professionals, individuals with lived experience, families, criminal justice professionals, first responders, and community advocates, this annual gathering is your opportunity to connect, learn, and spark change. Together, we'll challenge the stigma surrounding mental illness and build stronger bridges among Delaware's service providers. Through dynamic presentations and powerful conversations, you'll gain tools, insights, and strategies you can take to your practice, research, family, or personal recovery journey. Come ready to be inspired, and to inspire others.

*Register Now*  
 NAMI Delaware  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

2025 Inspiring Hope Conference  
Keynote Speaker: Tamika Tremaglio  
October 16, 2025

Theme: Flip the Script, Rewriting  
the Story of Mental Illness

