

Laurie Emerson, Executive Director
NAMI Vermont
January 31, 2017
Mental Health Advocacy Day
Caring for Vermonters - Invest in Mental Health
Committee: House Health Care
Re: NAMI Vermont - Priorities and Programs

Chairman Lippert and Committee Members, thank you for inviting NAMI Vermont to testify to your committee.

- **Who I Am:** My name is Laurie Emerson. I am the Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Vermont (NAMI Vermont).
- **Today is Mental Health Advocacy Day** - “Caring for Vermonters - Investment in Mental Health” - 44 co-sponsoring organizations and advocates are here today.
 - Please visit us in Room 11.
- **Who We Are:** NAMI Vermont is the independent Vermont chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a statewide non-profit, grassroots, volunteer organization
- **Who We Serve:** Family members, friends, individuals affected by a mental health condition, the community, and professionals who work directly with people affected by a mental health condition
- **Our Mission:** NAMI Vermont supports, educates and advocates so that all communities, families, and individuals affected by mental illness or mental health challenges can build better lives.
- **Core Competency:** Lived experience is key in the success of our organization and programs
- **Statistics:**
 - 1 in 5 people experience a mental illness - that’s approximately 25,000 individuals.
 - One in 20 adults lives with serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder.
- **What We Do:**
 - Trained volunteers administer all our programs - up to 100 volunteers
 - Support Groups
 - Family Support Groups - 10 Locations - 800 attended - 500 volunteer hours
 - Connection Recovery Support Groups - 1500 Attended 900 volunteer hours
 - 6 community groups - 3 psychiatric hospital groups
 - Education
 - Family-to-Family - 5 classes - 75 people served
 - Mental Illness and Recovery - 3 classes - 49 people served
 - Provider Education
 - In Our Own Voice
 - Resource Guidebook - Distributed 1500 copies
 - Annual Conference
 - Advocacy

- Participate in committees and workgroups
- Presentations and exhibits throughout state
- Fight stigma and discrimination through education
- Advocate at the State House by educating legislators
- Organize Mental Health Advocacy Day
- Annual Walk
- **Funding:** Through grants, donations, Annual Walk, Conference

What Do We See as Priorities? ER Wait Times and how we approach crisis intervention and stabilization. Eliminate Solitary Confinement in Corrections. Law Enforcement - crisis intervention and training.

Advocacy Goal: Youth and adults living with mental illness receive the right care at the right time and in the right place to experience lives of resiliency, recovery and inclusion.

Our Priorities: (see NAMI Vermont's expanded priorities)

1. Increase mental health funding
2. Ensure access to effective mental health services for everyone
 - a. ER Wait Times - increase beds
 - b. Hospital diversion, mental health stabilization
3. Ensure safe and respectful crisis intervention
 - a. Law enforcement training
 - b. Mobile Crisis Teams
4. End the inappropriate incarceration of people with mental illness
 - a. Mental health treatment
5. Provide training for mental health professionals and providers
 - a. IOOV, Provider Education
6. Provide appropriate, affordable housing for people with mental illness
 - a. Provide variety of affordable permanent housing
7. Promote early diagnosis and intervention strategies, including suicide prevention initiatives
 - a. Suicide Prevention Coalition
8. Promote wellness and the integration of mental health, substance use and primary care services
9. Help people with mental illness to support themselves through meaningful work

Thank you for your attention and listening to our comments.