

## NAMI VOLUNTEER TELEPHONE TRAINING

### Welcome NAMI volunteers!

We are so grateful for you for giving your time and energy. We'd like to give some tips so that your experiences will be positive ones.

- 1) Always try to present yourselves professionally. You represent NAMI to families and consumers who will see you as the face of NAMI so we want to appear as professional as possible.
- 2) In addition to phone activities (which we'll discuss below), some general tasks volunteers can help with are:
  - photocopying
  - mailings
  - labeling brochures (w/local information)
  - folding tri-fold brochures if they are photocopies
  - distributing brochures (to hospital racks, local providers, etc.)

### GENERAL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS:

**NOTE: The suggestions we make here can be applied to working in person with families and consumers as well.**

**IMPORTANT WARNING:** Please be sure NOT to give any advice related to treatment and/or medications being used by the caller or their family member. Remind your caller/visitor that you are not a clinician but a family member and/or consumer. Our business lines are "help" lines, not crisis lines as those types of call lines have professional databases for referral, and phone operators specifically trained to handle such calls. We listen sympathetically, of course, and we then refer callers to approved resources to the best of our ability.

People are not usually sure what NAMI does or can provide them with. They may think it can help with housing, employment, finances, insurance, etc.

### SO WHAT IS NAMI:

- NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons living with serious mental illness and their families. Founded in 1979, NAMI has become the nation's voice on mental illness, a national organization including NAMI organizations in every state and in over 1100 local communities across the country who join together to meet the NAMI mission through advocacy, research, support, and education. There are over 1000 members in the state of Kentucky and over 220,000 Nationally.

- **In short, you can tell people that NAMI is a nonprofit organization that provides education, support, and advocacy services for those affected by mental illness.** All services for families and consumers are free of charge.
- Services that we offer are listed in the general NAMI brochure and on our website under “Programs.” (see Programs handout attached)
- Your local affiliate *may or may not* have some or any of the classes or support groups listed, but another affiliate nearby may. To find out, you can call the state office: 1-800-257-5081.
- Affiliates in KY: Your purple contact sheet will give you contact names and numbers of all affiliates in Kentucky who offer support groups and possibly Family-to-Family classes. Call the contact and check with them, or refer your caller to the contact for a nearby affiliate, to find out about services near the caller/visitor.

If you are ever unsure where to refer caller to, you can

- Refer them call the NAMI KY state office: 1-800-257-5081.
- Refer them to the Seven Counties 24-hour Crisis Hotline: 1-800-211-0446
- Refer them to (local crisis number): \_\_\_\_\_

## TELEPHONE PROTOCOL:

- How to answer phones:** This is up to the affiliate but be sure and state the affiliate name. Here is an example: “NAMI Hazard--this is Sue. How can I help you?”
- What to do with i) information calls ii) crisis calls**

### A) Information Calls:

- Ask who they are and what they need specifically—be sure and log in your PHONE LOG (see template).
- Send materials or refer to local provider for information.
- Invite them to be on your nonmember mailing list to receive your local newsletter (if you don’t have one, tell them they’ll receive the NAMI KY mailing list and send us their contact information).
- Send a follow-up letter (see samples) depending on if it was a Family member, consumer, provider, or general interest call. Send this in a timely manner. Always, include your brochure (or state brochure), a F2F brochure, a support group listing, and whatever other information they require (ie. information on schizophrenia).
- Information on disorders can be from 1) brochures purchased from National or 2) Fact Sheets which you can retrieve from the NAMI KY website (show samples).
- Information on current research and or research studies that they might participate in:
  - National Institute of Mental Health: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
  - [www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov): A Service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health.

- g) If you cannot give them what they need, direct them to call the NAMI KY office at 1-800-257-5081 or the Seven Counties Crisis Hotline at (1-800-211-0446).

**Information Referrals :**

We refer to other agencies when we don't have the answers. Common agencies to refer to are:

- Social Security Office
- Medicaid/Medicare Office
- Housing agencies
- Alcohol and drug Rehabs
- Support groups (NAMI and otherwise, ie. DBSA).
- Day programs
- Protection and Advocacy (P&A) for legal issues
- Websites for resources
- Legislators. To find their local legislators, they can go to the Kentucky Legislators Homepage: <http://lrc.ky.gov>. Click on link on left that says "Who's My Legislator?"
- Providers. If they want a referral to a specific psychiatrist/psychologist, here's what we say, "As a NAMI representative, I cannot recommend a specific providers. As a family member (or consumer), I found this person helpful:  
\_\_\_\_\_"

**B) Crisis Calls: There are no easy answers sometimes.**

- a) Be sure and have your PHONE LOG sheet open so that you can enter information as you listen.
- b) First spend time listening and reflecting "I can see this is really upsetting for you." Gather information through summarizing what they're told you to be sure you are getting the correct information, and asking questions.
- c) Feel free to reveal if you are a consumer or family member—people like to know they are talking to someone who understands.
- d) After they've had time to just talk and be listened to, ask specifically what they would like your help with (resources/phone numbers, information on support groups, classes, or diagnoses, etc.)
- e) Refer them using your local resource list. If you cannot find resources, direct them to call the NAMI KY office: 1-800-257-5081 or the Seven Counties Crisis Hotline which is statewide: 1-800211-0446.
- f) Do not hang up without having given them a specific plan or resource. Ask if there is anything else you can do. Let them know they can call again and that you are glad they called.
- g) Invite them to be on your nonmember mailing list to receive newsletter, etc. Log their contact information in your PHONE LOG, and log the plan of action you took with the call.

**NOTE:** When you are dealing with families visiting patients in the hospital, you would handle them in very much the same way you would a crisis call.

- **FIRST, do a lot of listening. They need to talk with someone who understands.** They may hope you can answer questions re: if their loved one will get better from this (especially if it's a first hospital).
- Reveal that you are a family member and that NAMI is there for them as it was for you.
- Give hope—treatment works. This is what they need. But try to do so realistically. It may be a long haul. Be sure and tell them that you are glad they found NAMI as it will be a resource for them now and in future should they need education and support.
- Strongly encourage them to take a Family-to-Family class if there is one offered in or near your affiliate. Education will be the best help to them.
- Refer them to the family support group in your area. Be aware that sometimes a first visit to a support group can be daunting for families, especially if they are not ready to accept that their loved one has a mental illness and that this means it won't go away quickly like another illness. Make the comparison to diabetes. It is biological. They did not cause it. And like diabetes, it can be managed effectively with treatment.
- Be sure before they leave that they know how to get in touch with you again. Encourage them to call “just to talk” especially for folks this is new to; or even for folks who've been through the system for years but didn't know about NAMI and felt they were alone.
- The most important service you can offer these folks, at the moment, is a compassionate ear from someone who understands. You will not have easy answers but you can listen, and they will greatly appreciate this.

### **IMPORTANT! LOCAL NAMI Services/contacts**

- 1) Be sure you know any meeting/class information: where and when, who this group is for (families, consumers, or both), contact name and number for support group meetings, Family-to-Family classes, etc.
- 2) Be sure you have a list of Board officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, as well as their contact information.

**Advocacy:** Be sure you know your state and local legislators and how to contact them (see enclosed form). You can visit the website for Kentucky Legislators and look for your local legislator at [www.krc.ky.gov](http://www.krc.ky.gov). We often get requests from Our Advocacy Chair, Sheila Schuster, to make phone calls to legislators so you need to be able to tell your members/callers who they are and how to contact them.

### **Legal Issues:**

If folks need advice about legal issues (guardianship, etc.), refer them to P&A (Protection and Advocacy) in Frankfort: 1-800-564-2967.

**Mailings:**

After a phone call, you always follow-up with a letter. I've included in your packet 4 sample letters: to family member, to consumer, to provider, to a general interest call (ie. a high school student). Use (or develop) your affiliate letterhead for this purpose.

In addition, they may request specific information. To see all brochures available for order from NATIONAL, go to [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org); click "NAMI Store" on left; Click "Brochures."

**In General, mail these out to everyone:**

- affiliate or NAMI KY brochure
- Family-to-Family brochure
- Support group listing page (across the state)
- Most recent newsletter (if you have one)
- A membership envelope

**Additional Information they may request:**

- Seeking Answers...About Your Child's Mental Health (for parents of children)
- \*\*Information on specific disorders (on specific diagnoses (ie. schizophrenia; or on several disorders (ie. "An Illness Like Any Other" brochure)
- Suicide information
- In Our Own Voice program (consumers)
- The Emerging Role of Mental Health Workers...(for Providers)
- Brochures in Spanish

\*\* to save money, instead of purchasing these brochures from National, you can print and make copies of the Fact Sheets found on our website: [ky.nami.org](http://ky.nami.org) under "Resources"

**You can get these brochures from NAMI KY or another source:**

- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT): a training program for police officers
- *Out of the Shadows* (a course for parents of children/adolescents)
- *Family Connections*: A Course for families of Borderline Personality Disorder patients.
- Book/website list (also available from our website).
- KYCAN (Kentucky Consumer Advocate Network): This is the state consumer organization: (502) 245-5281
- Partnership for Prescription: for those who need help paying for prescriptions: 1-888-477-2669.

**NOTE:** Be sure and mail things in a timely manner. It makes NAMI look responsive and professional.

