

NAMI WASHINGTON ADVOCACY PLAN

1. BASIS FOR ADVOCACY.

The NAMI Washington mission, roles, and responsibilities for advocacy are defined in the March 22, 2003 “Reconstitution Plan” with appropriate parts extracted as the basis for the development of this “Advocacy Plan”:

MISSION STATEMENT: NAMI Washington provides support, education and advocacy for its affiliates.

NAMI Washington accomplishes its advocacy mission through the following:

- Providing affiliates policy on State issues
- Providing affiliates access to government offices and officials
- Mediating disputes between affiliates

Definition of NAMI Washington:

NAMI Washington is a service organization for its affiliates.

- Through the Public Policy Committee, NAMI Washington provides policy on State issues for affiliates to disseminate to their membership.
- NAMI Washington staff, Board members and committee members will develop relationships with peer organizations for political and advocacy advantages.
- NAMI Washington staff, Board members and committee members can provide access to State bureaucracy for affiliate leaders.

From the NAMI Washington By-Laws

ARTICLE 9 PUBLIC POLICY

Public Policy Committee:

There will be a Public Policy Committee consisting of not less than three members appointed by the NAMI Washington Board of Directors. Public Policy Committee members will serve a one (1) year term. The President will appoint the Chairperson of the Public Policy Committee. The Board of Directors reserves the right to remove members of this committee as they sees fit. The Public Policy Committee will receive written and oral testimony from NAMI members, leaders, friends and allies regarding public policy issues and make a written position recommendation to the Board of Directors for their approval. If the Board of Directors approves a position by a two-thirds vote, it will be adopted as policy and implemented through the affiliate membership.

Executive Director:

Support, Advocacy, and Education Duties

- Assist Board in determining advocacy priorities.
- Promote innovation and creativity in program areas.

- Membership on advisory boards, committees, and councils committed to mental health (or other agencies that have direct impact on the mentally ill).
- Communication with media regarding NAMI matters and other matters relating to the mentally ill.

Other Duties as assigned.

2. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Under the new NAMI Washington organization as described in the restructuring plan, responsibility for the bulk of advocacy activities, especially with State legislators, shifts to the affiliates. These activities include issue identification; recommendations for issue resolution (initiating/supporting legislation, rule changes, and public policies); educating local legislators, officials in city/county government, law enforcement, and mental health workers; and actively influencing legislators in support or opposition to specific legislative matters.

In the past affiliates generally offered support to NAMI legislative recommendations by sending cards, letters, and email to their local elected representatives when asked or prompted. A few individuals developed relationships with individual legislators which ranged from being acquaintances to close friendships. In Olympia NAMI Washington employed a professional lobbyist to interact with legislators and committees and provide status reports to the membership. This process is very similar to what all other interest groups use and is credited for some success. It might also reflect conventional wisdom that issues attracting great affirmative interest fare far better than those attracting no public response which is written off as indifference.

Under the past system affiliates didn't need to be well adept at communicating with or relating to the political structure. That has changed. Under the new system affiliates require training, a guidebook, the development of individual and personal relationships with their elected officials at all levels, greater amounts of information made available to educate affiliate members so that they can best make their case, publication of the issues and NAMI positions so that everyone "speaks with the same voice," and prompts during legislative sessions to help spur the process along.

NAMI Washington has the responsibility for providing leadership and support to its affiliates on advocacy issues. An Advocacy Consultant, working with the NAMI Washington Public Policy Committee, will take the lead for the State working under the NAMI Washington Executive Director.

A starting point each summer between legislative sessions is for the Advocacy Consultant to provide the NAMI Washington, its affiliates, and the Public Policy Committee a review of the last session identifying issues having NAMI support which will carry over into the next session.

Then the Advocacy Consultant fills in the time over the summer and early fall to train affiliate volunteers and new members of the Public Policy Committee in advocacy techniques. (Note: our By-Laws require the appointment of a new Public Policy Committee each year.)

The State Public Policy Committee takes input from the affiliates in the form of meetings/workshops in the field and takes written/oral testimony wherever they are. They analyze the input and make written policy recommendations to the NAMI Washington Board. Upon the Board's approval the President of NAMI Washington provides the approved policies and position Statements to the Policy Committee, the affiliates, and the Advocacy Consultant for implementation. The Board's Executive Director becomes what in essence is a coordinator of activities using the resource of the Advocacy Consultant as needed.

The affiliates make the necessary contacts locally with other interest groups, community leaders (public and private), and their legislators. They are responsible for outreach, education, and advocacy for the approved issues within their boundaries.

While the affiliates are fulfilling their roles, the Public Policy Committee stays involved to analyze and pass recommendations to the Board on adjustments proposed to accommodate allies and partners, accommodate various affiliate interests, and to monitor that NAMI Statewide speaks with one voice.

In January each year, the Executive Director and Advocacy Consultant plan and stage an event known as "NAMI Day". This day begins in Olympia with a breakfast bringing together NAMI affiliate members with their legislators. The rest of the day is spent in meetings set up by the Advocacy consultant between members and legislators and/or their staffs.

As the session progresses the Advocacy Consultant provides the Board, the Affiliates, and the Public Policy Committee weekly updates. When support from members is required the Public Policy Consultant and/or the Executive Director will issue "alerts" which initiate telephone calls, emails, and letters to legislators by their NAMI constituents to keep their position fresh in the minds of legislators.

After each session the process recycles.

3. THE PLAYERS AND THEIR ROLES.

The advocacy mission as defined above has many players with several roles. One key role is not formally addressed in the "Reconstitution Plan", and it is one of the most important – that of Advocacy Consultant. The players and their roles are outlined below:

The Board of Directors, NAMI Washington.

- The Board President appoints the Chairperson of the Committee in consultation with the full Board
- Appoints a Public Policy Committee consisting of not less than three members who serve a one (1) year term. The Board may remove members of this Committee as it sees fit
- Appoints replacements to the Public Policy Committee as required
- Reviews and approves public policy recommendations promulgated by the Public Policy Committee and implements these recommendations through the affiliate membership.

- Develops policies and State-wide positions and communicates these to its affiliate membership.
- Is responsible for all State-wide advocacy policies and programs.
- Provides advocacy training to the Public Policy Committee and affiliates.
- Provides access to government offices and officials.
- Develops relationships with peer organizations for political and advocacy advantages.
- Oversees and supervises the operations of the Public Policy Committee and the Advocacy Consultant.
- Consider policy recommendations from the Public Policy Committee, insure that they are consistent with National policies and the majority of Washington affiliates
- Annually review the effectiveness of the advocacy infrastructure and processes and make changes as needed.

The Executive Director, NAMI Washington.

- Performs all executive functions on behalf of the Board of Directors
- Assists the Board in selecting the Advocacy Consultant
- Negotiates the contract with and supervises the Advocacy Consultant
- Assists the Board in determining advocacy priorities.
- Provides an interface between the Chair of the Public Policy Committee and the Board
- Promotes innovation and creativity in program areas.
- Membership on advisory boards, committees, and councils committed to mental health (or other agencies that have direct impact on the mentally ill).
- Communication with media regarding NAMI and other matters relating to the mentally ill.

The NAMI Washington Public Policy Committee

- Will have no more than 9 members.
- Receive written and oral testimony from NAMI affiliate presidents, leaders, members, and friends and allies regarding public policy issues.
- Based on this input, make written recommendation to the Board of Directors regarding official NAMI positions.
- Make recommendations to the Board on changes in our governmental strategies to better achieve NAMI goals.
- Examine the design and execution of public policy to include the performance of all parties having roles in the process, use of resources in executing the policy, public statements on public policy, and the success in achieving public policy objectives.
- After each legislative session evaluate the present public policy making and make recommendations for change to the NAMI Washington Board.

The Advocacy Consultant to NAMI Washington:

The Advocacy Consultant retained by the NAMI Washington Board of Directors has many diverse responsibilities but specific duties and scope of work are subject to annual negotiation with the Board. Among the specific duties that may be assigned are the following:

Training

- Train the Public Policy Committee: Conduct a training session for Public Policy Committee members on how legislation is proposed, moves through the process, and ends up as law; a method for evaluating issues to determine NAMI support; and how to communicate in terms both the membership and the legislators can understand.
- *Train the trainers*: Hold two or more regional training sessions for affiliate presidents with the focus on assisting with volunteer recruitment and retention and creating strategies to build member involvement and advocacy skills.
- *Legislative advocacy trainings*: When the legislature is out of session conduct training for affiliate advocacy volunteers to include how the legislature works, how to be successful advocates for mental health issues, and strategies that increase the ease and effectiveness of legislative advocacy
- Prepare documentation: Prepare an advocacy handbook or guide as a basic reference on NAMI advocacy. This handbook would include; a brief introduction on the need for an effective advocacy network at all levels, some general principals and guidelines that should be followed when engaging in an advocacy effort; a mechanism to compile critical information; list of key local, State, federal and media contacts that can be easily accessed by members of the local affiliate.

Advising the State Public Policy Committee

- Prepare summaries of issues to be considered in the next legislative session noting items where NAMI Washington has already taken a position.
- Work as an advisor to the Committee on shaping input from the affiliates into clear, positive positions.
- Meet with the Committee Chair or Committee Members as needed to provide expert opinion on the process.

Making introductions to key public officials

- Introduce the NAMI Washington Executive Director and affiliate members to key public officials and facilitate discussions and meetings.
- Help facilitate those local relationships with a goal of every active affiliate making a personal contact with at least three state legislators, one police chief or sheriff and one mayor or County Executive by January 1 2004

Monitoring and reporting on legislative activities

- *Bill tracking*: Follow all legislation that pertains to NAMI agenda items or that may be of interest to NAMI members. Check on progress daily and provide updates to members as requested. Much of this information will be included in weekly reports as well.

- *Develop an alert system:* When something important and time sensitive occurs in Olympia, contact the affiliate presidents or another contact person by email (or phone if absolutely necessary), so that they can send out an email or start their phone tree. Recommend a specific action so that it is easy for members to quickly contact their own legislators with one clear message.
- *Write legislative updates:* Send out weekly legislative updates that detail the movement on bills that are on the NAMI legislative agenda and that recommend an action by members. This strategy is intended to allow people to follow the movement of legislation they care about, as well as demystifying the legislative process so that members feel more comfortable about contacting their legislators.
- *NAMI Day:* Plan and facilitate one NAMI Day each January. Assist NAMI Washington affiliates by setting appointments with legislators for members who will be in Olympia. On NAMI Day address the group, advise them on meetings with legislators, update attendees on legislation, lead groups to meetings, give tours of the capitol, and so on.
- *Individual attention:* Throughout session be available to lead members around campus, set up meetings with legislators, help people testify on pertinent legislation and answer questions of affiliates and individual members as needed.
- *Testimony:* Often it is more helpful for actual clients of mental health services or individuals from specific districts to testify about the effects of particular bills. Help people willing to testify to prepare, give them information about the committees they will testify before, and acquaint them with the procedure. In addition, provide legislators with copies of written testimony if a NAMI member cannot be at a hearing, and personally present that testimony to the committee.
- *Meet with legislators:* speak to Senators and Representatives about the agenda set forth by NAMI, look for allies on NAMI issues and elicit votes and support for the NAMI agenda items on a daily basis during the session and less frequently during the interim. Assist the Executive Director with critiques and try to develop compromises on NAMI issues or offer more information in an effort to change their position.

The Affiliates.

- Become knowledgeable of local and State issues of NAMI concern.
- Provide information and affiliate position on issues to the NAMI Washington Public Policy Committee
- Provide volunteers having the time and interest in advocacy to receive training by the NAMI Washington Advocacy Consultant.
- Meet and develop relationships with local government officials, legislators, and key public administrators to maintain a dialogue on issues of NAMI interest.
- Meet regularly with local legislators on specific items of interest.
- Provide members to participate in NAMI Day in Olympia each year.
- Create a communication tree for members to telephone, write, or email legislators upon receipt of alerts from the Advocacy Consultant, NAMI Washington Board or Executive Director, or Public Policy Committee.