

NAMI Basics Education Program Research Project 2008-2009

NAMI Basics is a peer-led educational program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents with a mental illness. Development of this program was based on the success of other NAMI signature education programs for consumers and families available across the country. NAMI drew on course elements which have been extensively tested and found to be highly effective in the field. These elements include:

- Recognition of mental illness as a continuing traumatic event for the child and the family;
- Sensitivity to the subjective emotional issues faced by family caregivers and well children in the family;
- Recognition of the need to help ameliorate the day-to-day objective burdens of care and management;
- Gaining confidence and stamina for what can be a life-long role of family understanding and support; and
- Empowerment of family caregivers as effective advocates for their children.

The NAMI Basics Program is a six week course (15 total hours) taught by trained teachers who are also the parents or other caregivers of individuals who developed symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 13. A research study is currently underway to evaluate the impact of the NAMI Basics course focusing on the following outcomes:

- Parental stress in dealing with their child's illness, insurance, and providers
- Parental empowerment in getting information to better help their child, advocating for services, and dealing with their child's difficulties
- Parental self-care, meaning taking care of their emotional, physical, and psychological needs
- Family problem solving and communication skills

The study is being led by Dr. Barbara Burns, Duke University and Dr. Kimberly Hoagwood, Columbia University. All caregivers participating in the NAMI Basics Education Program in Tennessee and Mississippi will be asked to participate in the study, which consists of a pre-test, a post test, and a three month follow-up. The study will be open to participants in all Basics classes taught in those two states between October 2008 and May 2009.

The final report of the findings of the study, including conclusions and recommendations from Dr. Burns and Dr. Hoagwood, is expected in November 2009.

For more information about the study or the NAMI Basics Education Program, contact:

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