



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Through the Years 1979–2024



During the 1970s, family support groups scattered around the nation were seeking answers and treatments for their loved ones affected by mental illness. One group in California transformed a small gathering of families into an organization called Parents of Adult Schizophrenics, a nonprofit association that eventually changed its name to the Alliance for the Mentally Ill of San Mateo.

This local coming together helped spur a national movement. What started as a wave of frustrated parents concerned for their children grew into a tsunami of organized trailblazers advocating for more research, greater support, and broader public awareness called the National Alliance on Mental Illness: the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization.

Follow our journey as we capture some of the many milestones in advocacy, research, education and awareness achieved over 45 years!



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additional milestones**

Through the Years 1979–1989

1979



- ▶ 284 individuals met in Wisconsin from 59 different family support groups in 29 states and Canada. A resolution was adopted to incorporate the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).

1980



- ▶ The Mental Health Systems Act of 1980, which provided grants to expand community mental health services, was signed into law.
- ▶ The first national office opened in Washington, D.C. — a one-room apartment.

1982



- ▶ NAMI was appointed to the National Mental Health Advisory Council.

1983



- ▶ Dr. E. Fuller Torrey published *Surviving Schizophrenia*. His appearance on “The Phil Donahue Show” resulted in NAMI’s two phone lines flooding.
- ▶ NAMI advocacy helped restore funding for the National Institute of Mental Health’s (NIMH) Community Support Program.

1984



- ▶ The first-ever public service announcements, “Shattered Dreams” and “Scrapbook,” featuring NAMI members were aired nationally.
- ▶ NAMI hired its first paid Executive Director Laurie Flynn.

1985



- ▶ NAMI launched the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression.

1986



- ▶ NAMI added its 600th affiliate, completing a sweep of all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Guam.

1988



- ▶ NAMI provided seed grant to support the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in Memphis, Tennessee.





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Through the Years 1990–1999

1990

- ▶ NAMI established the NAMI HelpLine.
- ▶ Patty Duke starred in a movie about mental illness; her appearance on “The Oprah Winfrey Show” flooded NAMI phone lines.
- ▶ NAMI won inclusion of persons disabled by a mental illness in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- ▶ NAMI successfully lobbied Congress to designate the first full week in October as Mental Illness Awareness Week.

1991

- ▶ NAMI advocated for increased funding for NIMH, helping to secure \$511 million — doubling the NIMH budget at the time.

1992

- ▶ NAMI marched on Capitol Hill with half a million petitions calling for mental health parity.

1996

- ▶ NAMI’s advocacy to enact the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 was a success; it was signed into law and ended discriminatory annual and lifetime dollar limits for mental health care.
- ▶ Living with Schizophrenia launched; it was later modified and renamed NAMI In Our Own Voice.

1997-1998

- ▶ NAMI Family-to-Family, developed by Dr. Joyce Burland, launched as NAMI’s first family education program.
- ▶ NAMI Provider Education launched.

1999

- ▶ NAMI participated in the first White House Conference on Mental Health.
- ▶ NAMI was lauded in the first-ever “Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.”
- ▶ NAMI Family Support Group launched.





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Through the Years 2000–2009

2001-2003

- ▶ NAMI Peer-to-Peer launched.
- ▶ NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates hosted the first 12 NAMIWalks events.
- ▶ De Familia a Familia de NAMI (NAMI Family-to-Family in Spanish) launched.

2004

- ▶ NAMI's Multicultural Action Center held the third annual minority mental health care symposium, "African Americans: Facing Mental Illness & Experiencing Recovery."

2005

- ▶ Dr. Danny Weinberger received NAMI's First Scientific Research Award.
- ▶ NAMI National Board members spoke at the inaugural National CIT Conference in Columbus, Ohio, featuring the Memphis Police Department's groundbreaking CIT program.

2006

- ▶ NAMI released the first "Grading the States: A Report on America's Health Care System for Serious Mental Illnesses."

2007

- ▶ NAMI Connection was launched.
- ▶ Cast and crew of the Fox TV series "House" kicked off fundraising campaign benefiting NAMI.

2008

- ▶ With NAMI's advocacy, the U.S. House of Representatives established July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in the namesake of NAMI's national spokesperson and leading African American author.
- ▶ NAMI's long-time advocacy around parity results in the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act, establishing mental health parity, being signed into law.
- ▶ NAMI Basics education program launched.
- ▶ NAMI Smarts for Advocacy launched.





National Alliance on Mental Illness

Through the Years 2010–2019

2010-2019

2010

- ▶ PBS stations nationwide aired “When Medicine Got It Wrong,” a documentary about NAMI’s grassroots origins and founding as a national organization.
- ▶ De Persona a Persona de NAMI (NAMI Peer-to-Peer in Spanish) launched.

2011-2012

- ▶ Formal research on NAMI Family-to-Family and NAMI Basics found that both programs were effective in supporting family members/caregivers.
- ▶ Bases y Fundamentos de NAMI (NAMI Basics in Spanish) launched.

2013

- ▶ NAMI participated in the White House Interagency Task Force Meeting on Military and Veterans Mental Health.
- ▶ NAMI was awarded PR News’ Platinum Award for “You Are Not Alone” public education campaign on mental illness.
- ▶ NAMI Ending the Silence was adopted from NAMI DuPage County, Illinois, and launched.

2014

- ▶ NAMI volunteers taught NAMI Homefront for the first time.

2015

- ▶ NAMI launched the StigmaFree campaign, celebrated in part by the green lighting of the Empire State Building to signify hope.
- ▶ NAMI successfully advocated for SAMHSA-funded First Episode Psychosis program funding in the Community Mental Health Block Grant to be more than doubled to \$50 million.

2016

- ▶ NAMI launched “StigmaFree Company,” a campaign that unites corporate social responsibility and employee engagement initiatives to promote mental health awareness in the workplace.

2018

- ▶ Retail business group Hudson’s Bay Company, including divisions Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord + Taylor and Saks OFF 5TH, named NAMI a “best in class” mental health charity.
- ▶ NAMI Family & Friends seminar launched.
- ▶ NAMI takes part in its first lawsuit, fighting against the expansion of Short-Term Limited Duration Insurance, also called “junk insurance,” that isn’t required to cover mental health.
- ▶ NAMI launches the #Vote4MentalHealth campaign.

2019

- ▶ “CBS This Morning” ran a special live event, “Stop the Stigma: A Conversation About Mental Health,” featuring NAMI experts.
- ▶ NAMI launched Basics OnDemand online, making the course available 24/7.



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Through the Years 2020–2024

2020–2024

2020

- ▶ NAMI worked with partners and Foundation for National Institute of Health (FNIH), to launch Accelerating Medicines Partnership (for Schizophrenia, accelerating public-private partnerships in research.
- ▶ NAMI's HelpLine and programming went virtual to reach people during COVID.
- ▶ NAMI successfully advocated for the bipartisan passage of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act in October, which creates the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

2021

- ▶ NAMI launched the #ReimagineCrisis campaign and partnership, recruiting dozens of multi-sector organizations committed to improving community crisis response.

2022

- ▶ *You Are Not Alone*, NAMI's first book and a USA Today bestseller, hits bookshelves.
- ▶ NAMI's HelpLine launched text function.
- ▶ Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott made pivotal \$30 million investment in NAMI; NAMI invested one-third in the NAMI Alliance.
- ▶ NAMI started a new initiative, NAMI Next Gen, recruiting 10 young adult advisors annually to inform NAMI's operations and activities.
- ▶ NAMI advocated for 5x funding growth for the new 988 Lifeline, bringing funding to \$501.6 million.

2023

- ▶ President Biden announced efforts to strengthen mental health parity requirements; NAMI advocate introduced President Biden at the White House and NAMI advocates contributed 60 percent of all comments on the new proposal.
- ▶ NAMI took over leading the Community Health Equity Alliance (CHEA), an initiative to improve mental health care for Black/African Ancestry adults.
- ▶ NAMI launched StigmaFree Workplace Advisory Council, bringing leading employers together to drive NAMI's workplace mental health efforts.
- ▶ NAMI's HelpLine launched its Teen and Young Adult line, with young adult volunteers providing specialized support.
- ▶ NAMI partnered with Girl Scouts on Mental Wellness Patch Program.
- ▶ NAMIWalks recognized as top 30 Peer-to-Peer national fundraising organization for four consecutive years from 2020–2023.

2024

- ▶ NAMI partnered with newly-launched happy coffee™, with happy giving NAMI an equity stake in the company.
- ▶ NAMI to release its second book, *You Are Not Alone: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers* (Sept. 2024).