

## Overview

Policy change is one major way we can make a difference in the lives of people living with mental health conditions and their families. NAMI advocates for an array of issues including:

- Protecting people's access to treatment and services
- Attaining mental health parity
- Securing better funding for research

We maintain an active presence at the federal and state level on priority issues with relationships on both sides of the aisle. Below are resources on key policy priorities that may be helpful to you in your efforts with the NAMI community.

## Starting the Conversation: College and Your Mental Health

To help put a thoughtful plan into place should a mental health condition arise, NAMI and The Jed Foundation have created [this guide](#) to help start the conversation for college students and their families. It offers both parents and students the opportunity to learn more about mental health, including what the privacy laws are and how mental health information can be shared.

## Engagement: A New Standard for Mental Health Care

NAMI knows that the U.S. system of mental health care is failing to engage many people who seek help. The first interaction between a service provider and a person seeking care for a mental health condition can start a journey to recovery and a satisfying life, or leave a person unsure or hopeless about the future. The same is true about interactions with other people in the community. [This report](#) calls for a culture shift towards a mental health system that engages people with mental health conditions and their families.

## First Episode Psychosis (FEP) Programs: A Guide to State Expansion

NAMI believes that the roughly 100,000 youth and young adults who first experience psychosis each year deserve to realize the promise of hope and recovery. Research conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) shows that, compared to typical care, people with early psychosis who receive Coordinated Specialty Care in FEP programs (CSC-FEP) experience greater improvement in their symptoms, relationships and quality of life. Research also shows that the sooner people get CSC-FEP, the greater the improvements. In addition to early psychosis resources on the [NAMI website](#), NAMI created [this guide](#) to state expansion on FEP programs to help NAMI State Organizations lead the charge in helping to spread these programs in every state.

## **On Pins & Needles: Caregivers of Adults with Mental Illness**

At least 8.4 million Americans are providing care to an adult with an emotional or mental health issue, and nearly three quarters report that caregiving causes high emotional stress. In a [recent study](#), *On Pins & Needles: Caregivers of Adults with Mental Illness*, the National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with Mental Health America and NAMI identifies the inadequacies in the U.S. health care system in meeting the needs of families who manage moderate-to-serious mental illness.

## **Mental Health Parity: Out-of-Network, Out-of-Pocket, Out-of-Options**

For many Americans, finding quality, affordable mental health care is like navigating an obstacle course. High costs, difficulty finding providers and attempting to understand insurance documents can make accessing mental health care difficult for many, and impossible for some. In 2014, NAMI issued a report, *A Long Road Ahead: Achieving True Parity in Mental Health and Substance Use Care*, which described the results of a survey on the experiences of people with mental health conditions and their families with private health insurance. The survey revealed that, despite the requirements of federal parity legislation, people encountered significant barriers to receiving services. NAMI updated the survey in 2015 and found that people were continuing to confront these obstacles to care. [Out-of-Network, Out-of-Pocket, Out-of-Options](#) highlights the findings of this survey, which echoes the same truth about the status of mental health parity: we're not there yet.

## **Law Enforcement Guide: Preparing for the Unimaginable**

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy in 2012, NAMI worked with police chiefs from around the country to develop lessons learned on officer mental health. [This report](#), *Preparing for the Unimaginable*, is designed to help police departments prepare for mass casualty events and support emotional resiliency for first-responders and their communities.