



World Mental Health Day

Today marks World Mental Health Day! First celebrated in 1992, the day raises global awareness about mental health and drives action around a particular mental health topic. This year's theme is access to services - mental health in catastrophes and emergencies.



NAMI Mass Launches NEXTGEN

In July, NAMI Massachusetts launched our first NEXTGEN Youth Advisory Council. Modeled after NAMI National, NEXTGEN seeks to empower young adults across the state to contribute their voices, ideas, and needs to discussions about mental health services, policies, and programs.

Read more on page 2

Letter from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first issue of NAMI News! In this quarterly newsletter, we are excited to share news from NAMI Massachusetts, highlighting the work we do to support people living with mental health conditions across the state. You can look forward to advocacy updates, stories about our program impact, photos from community events, stigma-busting facts, and more. Thank you for reading!

Eliza T. Williamson
Executive Director
NAMI Massachusetts

State Legislative Updates

On October 6th, the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery heard testimony on H.2199, An act ending unnecessary hospitalizations, and H.2198, An act reducing emergency department boarding. NAMI Mass worked alongside a coalition of stakeholders to strategize on advocacy efforts, write and distribute fact sheets, and meet with members of the Committee. We also submitted testimony on both bills, expressing the importance of connecting people living with mental health conditions to appropriate, community-based services, reducing the use of unnecessary hospitalizations, and protecting the legal rights and dignity of people experiencing a mental health crisis. You can read the bills, fact sheets, and our testimony on the NAMI Mass website.

Did You Know?

Winter is rapidly approaching! During this time, it is normal for feelings of loneliness, grief, sadness, anxiety, or depression to intensify. Here are some tips to help you find comfort this winter season.

 Exercise and sunlight help to boost and regulate mood.

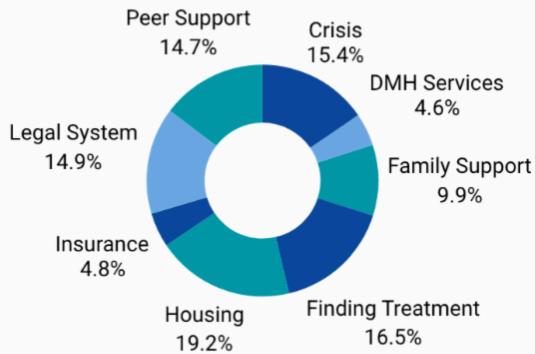
 If you've lost a loved one, sharing cherished memories can be cathartic.

 Lean on your friends, family, support groups, community groups, and wherever else you find connection.

 Trying something new can help you to break out of a routine.

Program Pulse: Compass

Compass Call Topics



The Compass Helpline had 1228 interactions between July and September. Trends included a high volume of calls and emails from people seeking information for loved ones who are inpatient, as well as steady outreach from people looking for peer and family support groups.

NEXTGEN Retreat

Our NEXTGEN Youth Advisory Council gathered in September for their first in-person event as a group. During the retreat, they brainstormed the issues facing youth and young adult mental health and discussed goals for the year: each council member will complete four individual projects and contribute to one larger, collaborative effort. Proposed projects focus on awareness and education, including bringing NAMI signature programs to new communities, improving outreach, and creating youth-focused resource guides. We are excited to be engaging and empowering these young adults!

Some of the council pictured with Eliza and Courtney during the Retreat



Looking Forward

Annual Meeting

The NAMI Mass annual meeting is scheduled for November 17 from 6:30-7:30pm on Zoom. Come to connect with members, vote for new board members, and discuss the organization.

In Our Own Voice

NAMI Mass is hosting an IOOV public presentation on Monday, October 20th from 7-8pm in honor of Depression Awareness.

Legislative Hearings

Three of our priority bills will be heard on October 14th: H.2201, S.1386/H.3291/H.3313, and S.1389/H.2211

Movember

Movember is a campaign for Men's Health, including men's suicide, celebrated in November.

Native American Heritage

November is also Native American Heritage Month! We look forward to honoring the contributions of Native voices in championing mental health.

New Campaign

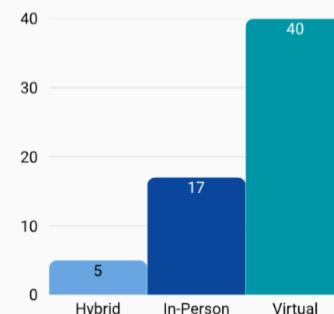
We just kicked off our End of Year Campaign, Answering the Call: Mental Health Can't Wait



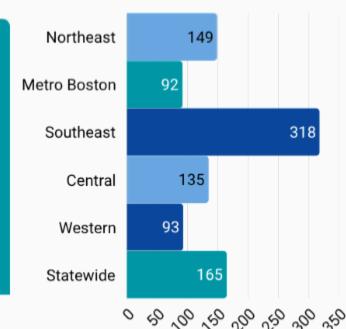
Program Pulse: Family Support

Our Family Support Groups (FSGs) are going strong! Check out the number of support groups offered and the number of participants by region from July to September:

Family Support Groups



Participants by Region



NAMI Mass Hosts Listening Sessions on Standards of Excellence

On Alliance Day, NAMI National kicked off NAMICON 2025 by announcing new Standards of Excellence (SOE). The Standards of Excellence are designed to establish best practices, roles, and responsibilities for NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates, and the proposed document would replace the existing standards that have been in place since 2010.

After the announcement, many NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates raised objections to changes proposed in the updated SOE. NAMI Mass recognized the need to come together to discuss the standards and gather feedback on how they would affect our statewide community. As a result, Executive Director Eliza T. Williamson, Board Secretary Kathleen Considine, and Criminal Justice Diversion Coordinator Josh Quirk facilitated listening sessions throughout the month of August with every Affiliate. We are so grateful for those who joined us to share their perspectives. NAMI Mass captured the common threads in the feedback that we received, compiling it in a letter sent to NAMI National and signed by the State Office and every Affiliate. Over the next few months, National will be reviewing feedback from the field and plan to release the final Standards early in 2026.

COMPASS: 617-704-6264



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Annual Meeting Registration

10/20 In Our Own Voice Registration

Program Pulse: Facilitator Drop-In Sessions

NAMI Mass has rolled out two new drop-in sessions for support group facilitators: one for Connection Recovery Support Group facilitators, and one for Family Support Group facilitators. We created these sessions after hearing from leaders that they wanted a regular opportunity to troubleshoot issues, get support, and connect with other facilitators. We recognize that facilitating support groups can be intense, so our goal is to foster a safe space where facilitators can come together, learn from each other, and ask NAMI Mass for resources or support. For more information about how to join, contact Ilya Cherkasov (Program Manager, Education and Support) at icherkasov@nanimass.org.

Drop-In Sessions for Connection Facilitators

Bimonthly on the 3rd Thursday from 6-7pm
Next session is November 23rd on Zoom

Drop-In Sessions for FSG Facilitators

Bimonthly on the 2nd Wednesday from 4-5:30pm
First session is November 12th on Zoom

Intergenerational Women Leaders Summit

NAMI Mass staff members recently attended The Future We Inherit: Intergenerational Women Leaders Summit, hosted by YW Boston. The event featured conversations about generational dynamics and leadership, tools for navigating bias, communication styles, and shared power, and connections with women across industries and generations. It was powerful to hear from other generations about how they were socialized to think about leadership, as well as how we can create workplaces for everyone to thrive. Thank you to YW Boston for hosting!



Program Pulse: Family Support Group Survey Results

In August, our Programs team sent out a survey to both FSG facilitators and participants to learn about how things are going, what they find helpful, and to identify ways that NAMI Mass can better support the community. Thank you so much to the more than 100 facilitators and participants who took the time to share feedback, and we look forward to implementing improvements! Key takeaways included:

- FSG facilitators are passionate about using their lived experience to support other family caregivers and give back to their community.
- Facilitators want more support around managing conflict and the chance to connect with other facilitators across the state.
- FSG participants appreciate the safe, supportive space created by the facilitators as well as the opportunity to connect with their community.
- Many participants expressed the hope that more FSGs would happen in-person. NAMI Mass plans to work with affiliates and FSG facilitators on this goal in the coming months.

Across The Commonwealth



Participants dance for mental health during a Zumba class at The Foundry, raising more than \$550 for NAMI



Eliza and Lisa Genova discuss the power of stories at the Broad Institute's Symposium on Severe Mental Illness.



New In Our Own Voice (IOOV) speakers pose after training.



Courtney and Lynsey represent NAMI Mass at Worcester Pride



NAMI Bristol County hosts candlelight vigils for World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week



Courtney meets with her Senator, Sal DiDomenico, during the LGBTQ+ Youth Day on the Hill.



A crowd gathers at Greater Boston Stand Down, where Josh and Jill share resources with veterans.

PLAN of MA & RI

NAMI Mass is grateful to PLAN of MA and RI for renewing our partnership. PLAN is a nonprofit organization proudly serving people with disabilities and assisting them with preserving assets, protecting access to benefits, and living well. Recently, PLAN committed \$75,000 to NAMI Mass, which will support our ongoing program work. Thank you to PLAN for their partnership and generosity!



Interested in learning more about PLAN? Join their upcoming webinar, Special Needs Trusts: Planning Options for You and Your Family, on November 6th at 5:30pm.

Staff Picks

More or Less Maddy by Lisa Genova

More or Less Maddy is the story of a young woman living with bipolar disorder. After experiencing a severe manic episode and receiving her diagnosis, Maddy deals with numerous ups and downs, going on a journey of self-discovery. Genova tackles topics including bipolar disorder, medication, therapy, family support, depression, and more with heart, humor, and hope.



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