

Guiding Principles

1. NAMI Mass acknowledges that mental health conditions do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic or disability status. NAMI Mass honors the wide range of cultural and community experiences that shape how people understand mental health. We recognize that people's intersectional experiences and social identities influence and impact their mental health in many ways. As such, we view mental health conditions as diverse, multi-layered, and complex, which requires us to ensure that all voices are included in the conversation around mental health.
2. NAMI Mass views mental health as a key component of overall health, and core to who we are as people. We seek to empower everyone to talk about mental health freely and without shame. We envision a world where people no longer fear discrimination for talking about mental health, disclosing a mental health condition, or seeking help. NAMI Mass believes in the power of stories to bring connection, share wisdom, raise empathy, and shift the narrative towards a more just future.
3. People with mental health conditions can be more vulnerable to discrimination and violations of their human rights in our current systems, including in hospitals, congregate care settings, prisons, education systems, and the workplace, and we recognize the structural inequities shaped by our laws and policies. We, as an organization, stand against any such violations. We seek to validate individuals' and families' experiences and address problems within the mental health system that allow abuses to occur. We want people's experiences to be heard, and we want mechanisms to ensure that concerns and violations are addressed.
4. We believe that people experience and understand the causes of mental health challenges in several ways. NAMI Mass recognizes the right of people living with a mental health condition to determine and name these causes. We understand that some people identify their experience as normal reactions to difficult life events, such as poverty, discrimination, social marginalization, violence, and other traumas, while others may identify their mental health challenge as more neurologically or biochemically based. There are many ways of understanding and experiencing a mental health condition and NAMI Mass supports the voices of people with lived experiences on where the challenges came from and what the path forward is.
5. NAMI Mass believes that "recovery" or "healing" from mental health challenges is real and possible, but that each person defines what this means individually. At the same time, we recognize that some people may not identify or agree with these terms. NAMI Mass acknowledges that these concepts may feel impossible or out of reach for some families, and we aim to support families on this journey. We believe that the idea of recovery can include grief and loss as well as hope and celebration. We aim to create shame-free space for individuals and families to express the full range of their experiences with mental health. We utilize a strengths-based lens, focusing on people's desire to live a life that is meaningful and fulfilling.