

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Karin Hack
E-mail: khack@namimd.org
Phone: 410-884-8691

NAMI Statement: The President's Mental Health Proposals

Arlington, Va. Jan. 16, 2013 - Michael J. Fitzpatrick, executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (**NAMI**) issued the following statement about President Obama's "Plan to Protect Children and Communities from Gun Violence," released today:

"NAMI applauds the President's **plan** for its significant provisions to strengthen and expand mental health services. The plan in fact reflects the thrust of many of NAMI's recommendations that we offered Vice President Biden's task force in the days immediately following the Newtown, Conn. tragedy. Out of tragedy, Americans today have an opportunity that probably comes only once in a generation. The mental health care system has long been broken. The challenge is not to fix it, but to build it anew, focusing on early screening, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. The President's plan takes important steps toward meeting that challenge, including:

- Early identification and intervention including training for teachers, school resource officers and others in a position to spot the signs of **mental illness** and provide assistance.
- Steps for improving mental health and substance abuse treatment for individuals between the ages of 16 and 25.
- Finalizing mental health parity regulations for health insurance.
- Training more than 5,000 additional mental health professionals to serve students and young adults.
- Launching efforts to improve understanding of mental illness and the importance of mental health treatment.

The President emphasizes the need for parents, teachers and school counselors to **work together**. In addition, NAMI emphasizes the importance of family education and support as a critical component in meeting the challenge. The President correctly notes that the vast majority of people living with mental illness are not violent.

NAMI supports fixing the existing federal background check system for gun purchases and emphasizes that this should include provisions to protect privacy and ensure that people will seek mental health treatment when needed. NAMI is eager to work with the Administration and Congress on the implementation of these important steps."

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About NAMI Maryland

NAMI Maryland is a grassroots organization dedicated to education, support and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with mental illnesses and their families. For more information go to www.namimd.org or call 1.877.878.2371.