



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI State Advocacy



Ten Simple Ways to Advocate

NAMI members are motivated to make a difference. We share a goal that every child and adult living with mental illness get the right care at the right time and place to experience a life of recovery. Your advocacy can help.

Advocacy is simple. You don't have to know about policies or politics and you don't have to have all the answers. The best advocacy is based on relationships—simply connecting with others to bring a real face to mental illness and recovery. Get started. Try one (or more) of the following:

- 1. Meet.** Schedule a meeting with elected officials when they are in their local districts or introduce yourself at local Town Hall meetings. Face-to-face meetings are personal and often have the greatest impact.
- 2. Educate.** Politely raise mental health issues with elected officials or candidates and their staff. Visit www.nami.org/election or www.nami.org/stateadvocacy for helpful fact sheets.
- 3. Question.** Ask a question about mental health care in person, by mail or online. See NAMI's Candidate Questions at www.nami.org/election for some good options.
- 4. Invite.** Ask an elected official to visit your mental health center or view a program. The best way to promote understanding and support is through one-on-one experiences.
- 5. Wear.** Grab attention and send a message without saying a word. Wear your NAMIWalks T-shirt, a mental health or NAMI sticker or pin or find your own way to “wear your issue.” Make a bigger impact by “wearing your issue” at legislative hearings and forums where elected officials or candidates are present.
- 6. Write.** Write an email, letter or postcard to elected officials, candidates or a newspaper about the need for mental health services that support recovery. Make it personal—include one to three lines about your lived experience.
- 7. Call.** A 30-second phone call to an elected official's office can make an impact. Make a clear “ask” for support of your issue—or thank your representative for supporting your issue.
- 8. Post.** Share mental health issues, articles, facts and more on the Twitter and Facebook accounts or blogs of elected officials and candidates—and post on your own online accounts.
- 9. Volunteer.** NAMI members can volunteer as individuals (not as representatives of NAMI) on campaigns. By volunteering, you can get close to the candidate and their inner circle and share your interest in mental health issues.
- 10. Vote.** One of the most important ways you can make a difference is to exercise your right to vote. Your vote counts—many elections are won by very small margins. Register at www.vote411.org.