

NAMI Maryland 2019 Policy & Advocacy Priorities

ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE TREATMENT + IMPROVED INSURANCE PARITY

Barriers to effective treatment are myriad and especially problematic for individuals with mental illness and their families. NAMI strongly supports the reduction of legal and other barriers that prevent access to timely, effective, and affordable services, including enhanced enforcement of insurance parity requirements. From routine denials of coverage to lack of in-network providers to burdensome authorization processes, accessing mental health care in Maryland is often difficult and expensive. Despite state and federal laws which require parity, enforcement is virtually nonexistent. NAMI supports efforts to reduce barriers and increase access to effective treatment, reaching and treating individuals with mental illness, and inclusion of family members in all of these efforts. We will continue to advocate for effective outreach, engagement, treatment and community supports for all those affected by mental illness in Maryland, no matter their race, social, geographical, economic or other status.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Improve the criminal justice system's response to individuals with mental illness and their families and increase diversion from criminal justice to community services wherever possible. Marylanders with mental illness are increasingly involved with the criminal justice system, often for minor violations. The consequences can be costly for communities, law enforcement and corrections and tragic for individuals with mental illness and their families. NAMI strongly supports efforts to divert individuals from the criminal justice system and a greater commitment to identifying and treating those already involved with the criminal justice system, and to prevent individuals with mental illness from interacting with the criminal justice system where at all possible.

PROTECT AND INCREASE FUNDING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Maryland's mental health service delivery system is fragmented and remains underfunded. Many with mental illness still experience disparities in the quality, timeliness, and availability of mental health services based on where they live in Maryland. In 2017, we successfully passed the HOPE Act, legislation that requires funding for increased services and reimbursement rates for behavioral health providers. In 2018, we successfully passed the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program, legislation that provides \$12 million in funding spread out over three years for local community crisis services support. Protecting these and other funds are an ongoing priority for NAMI.