

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

NAMI Condemns NRA Position as "Outrageous and Wrong."

ARLINGTON, Va., Dec. 21, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Michael J.Fitzpatrick , executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has issued the following statement:

"The National Rifle Association (NRA) response to last week's tragedy in Newtown Connecticut-in which 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School were killed-is outrageous and wrong.

The NRA has called for putting more guns in schools and creating a [bigger list of people treated for mental illness](#) -which presumably includes civic leaders, teachers who take prescriptions for anxiety or depression, police, fire fighters and veterans returning home from Afghanistan.

The NRA posed the question 'How many more copycats are waiting...A dozen more killers? A hundred? More? How can we possibly even guess how many, given our nation's refusal to create an active national database of the mentally ill?'

One in four American adults experience a mental health problem in any given year, yet the [U.S. Surgeon General](#) determined over a decade ago that 'the overall contribution of mental disorders to the total level of violence in society is exceptionally small.'

Law already exists requiring states to report the names of people 'adjudicated as mentally defective' to the National Instant Background Check System (NICS <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics>). It has never been properly implemented because of confusion surrounding the highly stigmatizing term "mentally defective" and the uncertain meaning of 'adjudicated.'

After the Virginia Tech tragedy in 2007, NAMI [recommended](#) (that Congress clean up existing law by adopting standards consistent with modern medical knowledge and clear legal procedures. We continue to support that approach.

When violence occurs, it is usually because something has gone terribly wrong in the mental health care system. We must address the fact that less than a third of Americans who have a diagnosable mental illness are able to get treatment. The NRA's proposal to create a bigger "active" national database will only discourage people reaching out for help. Stigma will be imposed. Stigma will be internalized. Stigma will turn into prejudice and discrimination.

NAMI condemns the NRA position. We hope the NRA instead will join others in seeking positive, workable, appropriate solutions. [NAMI stands ready to work](#) with the President, Congress and states to accomplish that end."

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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.