

2026 Advocacy Priorities

NAMI Maryland advocates for the people impacted by mental illness in our state. More than 58,000 individuals, family members, caregivers, and providers support our grassroots policy and advocacy work.

Funding

Marylanders are ten times more likely to be forced out-of-network for mental health care than for primary health care — making it more difficult to find care and less affordable due to higher out-of-pocket costs. An inadequate mental health system affects individuals, families and communities. There are 1.4 million Marylanders with a mental health condition and over 370,000 with a serious mental illness. NAMI Maryland opposes any reductions in Medicaid reimbursement levels, state funding for community-based mental health services, and advocates for funding of services and supports to a level that meets the needs of Marylanders living with mental illness.

Access to Effective Services & Support

Marylanders struggle to get the help they need. Many individuals with serious mental illnesses may need services and support throughout their lives. NAMI Maryland advocates for the most effective and appropriate care and provision of services for people who are living with mental illness.

Services and Support for Children & Adolescents

Children and adolescents with mental health conditions need more support in Maryland. About half of the Marylanders aged 12–17 who live with depression are unable to access treatment. Crisis services for children are unavailable in many parts of the state. NAMI Maryland advocates for children and youth to have the full continuum of care tailored with age-appropriate services.

Inpatient Treatment

NAMI believes that both acute and longer-term inpatient treatment are vital components in the continuum of care, meaning interventions and services that are necessary to assure a timely and durable recovery from the symptoms of mental illness. Because inpatient treatment may be involuntary or otherwise restrictive of a person's freedom, it must only be initiated after a competent and comprehensive clinical evaluation by a licensed mental health professional that demonstrates the clinical need for inpatient care.

Racial Disparities and Underserved Populations

Access to high-quality, affordable health care is a right. Racial and other health disparities based on ethnicity, disability and place of residence persist throughout Maryland. NAMI Maryland advocates for equity in mental health services and support systems.

Decriminalization of Mental Illness

NAMI Maryland advocates for the decriminalization of mental illness, meaning an end to the practice of punishing people through the criminal justice system because of actions related to their mental illness symptoms. One in four individuals with a serious mental illness will be arrested during their lives. NAMI Maryland advocates for help, not handcuffs, and believes that mental health emergencies deserve a mental health response.

Improve Maryland's Systems of Care

There must be meaningful participation by individuals with mental health conditions and families in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the public mental health care system as well as cultural sensitivity to ethnically diverse populations and communities.

Research

NAMI Maryland places a high priority on research aimed toward the ultimate prevention and cure of mental illness.