

NAMI THROUGH THE YEARS 1979-2019



During the 1970s, family support groups scattered around the nation were seeking answers and treatments for their loved ones affected by mental illness. One group in California transformed a small gathering of families into an organization called Parents of Adult Schizophrenics, a nonprofit association that eventually changed its name to the Alliance for the Mentally Ill of San Mateo.

This local coming together helped spur a national movement. What started as a wave of frustrated parents concerned for their children grew into a tsunami of organized trailblazers advocating for more research, greater support and broader public awareness called the National Alliance on Mental Illness: the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization.

Follow our journey as we capture some of the many milestones in advocacy, research, education and awareness achieved over 40 years!

- 1979** (Icon: Star in a square)
 - 284 individuals met in Wisconsin from 59 different family support groups in 29 states and Canada. A resolution was adopted to incorporate the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).
- 1980** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI joined influential Mental Health Liaison Group, the main mental health congressional lobbying coalition.
 - The Mental Health Systems Act of 1980, which provided grants to expand community mental health services, was signed into law.
 - The first national office opened in Washington, D.C. — a one-room apartment.
- 1982** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI was appointed to the National Mental Health Advisory Council.
- 1983** (Icon: Group of people)
 - Dr. E. Fuller Torrey published Surviving Schizophrenia. His appearance on "The Phil Donahue Show" resulted in NAMI's two phone lines flooding.
 - NAMI advocacy helped restore funding for the National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH) Community Support Program.
 - NAMI was accepted as a health agency in the Combined Federal Campaign.
- 1984** (Icon: Clapperboard)
 - The first-ever public service announcements, "Shattered Dreams" and "Scrapbook," featuring NAMI members were aired nationally.
 - NAMI hired its first paid Executive Director Laurie Flynn.
- 1985** (Icon: Location pin)
 - NAMI national headquarters was moved to Arlington, Virginia.
 - NAMI launched the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression.
- 1986** (Icon: Location pin)
 - NAMI added its 600th affiliate, completing a sweep of all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada and Guam.
 - The state Comprehensive Mental Health Services Plan Act of 1986 was enacted, giving individuals with mental illness and family members a key role in establishing state priorities for mental health services.
- 1988** (Icon: Brain)
 - NAMI received the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Distinguished Service Award.
 - NAMI provided seed grant to support the first Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in Memphis, Tennessee.
 - The FDA approved clozapine for treatment of schizophrenia, the first major new medication available in 30 years.
- 1989** (Icon: Brain)
 - Congress declared the 1990s as the "Decade of the Brain" to focus attention on the benefits of brain research.
- 1990** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI established the NAMI Helpline.
 - Patty Duke starred in a movie about mental illness; her appearance on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" flooded NAMI phone lines.
 - NAMI won inclusion of persons disabled by a mental illness in the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - NIMH released a landmark schizophrenia identical-twin study.
 - Congress established the first full week in October as Mental Illness Awareness Week.
- 1991** (Icon: Dollar sign)
 - NAMI advocated for increased funding for NIMH, helping to secure \$511 million — doubling the NIMH budget at the time.
- 1992** (Icon: Capitol dome)
 - NAMI marched on Capitol Hill with half a million petitions calling for mental health parity.
 - Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM) and John Danforth (R-MO) introduced the first federal mental illness parity bill.
- 1996** (Icon: Group of people)
 - The Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 was signed into law, ending discriminatory annual and lifetime dollar limits for mental health care.
 - "The Campaign to End Discrimination" was established, which focused on ending discrimination against people with severe mental illnesses in insurance, housing and employment.
 - Living with Schizophrenia launched; it was later modified and renamed NAMI In Our Own Voice.
- 1997-1998** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI Family-to-Family, developed by Dr. Joyce Burland, launched as NAMI's first family education program.
 - NAMI Provider Education launched.
- 1999** (Icon: White House)
 - NAMI participated in the first White House Conference on Mental Health.
 - NAMI was lauded in the first-ever "Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General."
 - Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM) and Paul Wellstone (D-MN) introduced the Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 1999.
 - NAMI Family Support Group launched.
- 2001-2003** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI Peer-to-Peer launched.
 - The New Freedom Commission on Mental Health issued a report with 19 recommendations for improving services for people with mental illness.
 - Affiliates held the first 12 NAMIWalks.
 - De Familia a Familia de NAMI (NAMI Family-to-Family in Spanish) launched.
- 2004** (Icon: Group of people)
 - NAMI's Multicultural Action Center held the third annual minority mental health care symposium, "African Americans: Facing Mental Illness & Experiencing Recovery."
 - The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act, providing resources to communities to find alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, was signed into law.
- 2005** (Icon: Police officer)
 - Dr. Danny Weinberger received NAMI's First Scientific Research Award.
 - NAMI National Board members spoke at the inaugural National CIT Conference in Columbus, Ohio, featuring the Memphis Police Department's groundbreaking CIT program.
- 2006** (Icon: Document with A+)
 - NAMI released the first "Grading the States: A Report on America's Health Care System for Serious Mental Illnesses."
- 2007** (Icon: TV)
 - NAMI Connection was launched.
 - Cast and crew of the Fox TV series "House" kicked off fundraising campaign benefiting NAMI.
- 2008** (Icon: Dollar sign)
 - U.S. House of Representatives established July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in the namesake of NAMI's national spokesperson and leading African American author.
 - The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act, establishing mental health parity, was signed into law.
 - NAMI Basics education program launched.
 - NAMI involved in PBS documentary "Depression: Out of the Shadows."
 - NAMI Smarts for Advocacy launched.
- 2009** (Icon: Book)
 - NAMI released follow-up "Grading the States: A Report on America's Health Care System for Adults with Serious Mental Illness."
- 2010** (Icon: House)
 - The Affordable Care Act was signed into law.
 - PBS stations nationwide aired "When Medicine Got It Wrong," a documentary about NAMI's grassroots origins and founding as a national organization.
 - De Persona a Persona de NAMI — the NAMI Peer-to-Peer program — was translated into Spanish.
- 2011-2012** (Icon: House)
 - The Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010, increasing federal supportive housing for people with mental illness, was signed into law.
 - Formal research on NAMI Family-to-Family and NAMI Basics found that both programs were effective in supporting family members/caregivers.
 - Bases y Fundamentos de NAMI — NAMI Basics — was translated into Spanish and launched.
- 2013** (Icon: White House)
 - NAMI participated in the White House Interagency Task Force Meeting on Military and Veterans Mental Health.
 - NAMI was awarded PR News' Platinum Award for "You Are Not Alone" public education campaign on mental illness.
 - The White House hosted its second National Conference on Mental Health and launched the National Dialogue on Mental Health.
 - NAMI Ending the Silence was adopted from NAMI DuPage County, Illinois, and launched.
- 2014** (Icon: Group of people)
 - OK2Talk.org, an online community for teens and young adults, was adopted and launched.
 - NAMI volunteers taught NAMI Homefront for the first time.
- 2015** (Icon: Shield with star)
 - NAMI partnered with Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., the nation's oldest sorority founded by African American college women, to expand mental health education, awareness and support activities on campuses and in local communities.
 - NAMI launched the StigmaFree campaign, celebrated in part by the lighting of the Empire State Building green to signify hope.
 - NAMI Homefront started being offered online.
 - NAMI successfully advocated for SAMHSA-funded First Episode Psychosis program funding in the Community Mental Health Block Grant to be more than doubled to \$50 million.
- 2016** (Icon: Stethoscope)
 - The 21st Century Cures Act successfully passed, incorporating measures and funding to help Americans with mental illness get the care they need.
 - NAMI launched "StigmaFree Company," a campaign that unites corporate social responsibility and employee engagement initiatives to promote mental health awareness in the workplace.
- 2018** (Icon: Sneaker)
 - Retail business group Hudson's Bay Company, including divisions Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord + Taylor and Saks OFF 5TH, named NAMI a "best in class" mental health charity.
 - U.S. fashion house Kenneth Cole Productions offered branded merchandise, a pair of green sneakers, supporting NAMI.
 - NAMI Family & Friends seminar launched.
 - NAMI collaborated with APA on the development of the Clinical Support System for SMI Technical Assistance Center (SMI Adviser).
- 2019** (Icon: Sneaker)
 - "CBS This Morning" ran a special live event, "Stop the Stigma: A Conversation About Mental Health," featuring NAMI experts.
 - NAMI partnered with HBO's "It's OK" initiative aimed at destigmatizing mental illness. HBO added content alerts to programs and featured NAMI's website and a dedicated helpline number.
 - NAMI advocated for passage of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act, designating 988 as the national crisis number for mental health emergencies.
 - NAMI Provider program became part of the required curriculum for third-year medical students at the Des Moines University School of Osteopathic Medicine.
 - NAMI launched Basics OnDemand online, making the course available 24/7.