



NAMI Multicultural Action Center

People of color face life-threatening disparities in access to high quality mental healthcare. Numerous recent reports, including the *Surgeon General's Report on Cultural, Race and Ethnicity* and the Institute of Medicine's report, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, point to the great disparities of minority mental health in this country and the resulting toll on our society.

In response to this national crisis, NAMI created its Multicultural Action Center. This Center works to focus attention on system reform to ensure access to culturally and linguistically competent services and quality treatment for *all* Americans and to help and support families of color who are dealing with mental illness. The Center's goals are:

- To advance NAMI's policy agenda and address issues that disproportionately affect diverse communities.
- Foster and support NAMI grassroots multicultural advocacy and outreach efforts.
- Build diverse leadership at all levels of the organization.
- Develop and promote culturally and linguistically competent support programs and practices.
- Develop strong partnerships with other similar organizations.
- Decrease stigma through public education that address specific cultural barriers.

Highlights

To advance NAMI's policy agenda and address issues that disproportionately affect diverse communities

Health Disparities –

The significant progress made in discovering effective treatments for serious mental illness has unfortunately not translated into better services for people of color living with these illnesses. The Multicultural Action Center joins forces with other organizations and coalitions to advocate for equal access to mental health treatment for diverse communities. The goal is to ensure that people from all races, cultures and ethnic groups with mental illness receive the best and most appropriate treatment and services that are available.

Lack of Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Service Delivery –

Mental health providers are usually ill-equipped to meet the needs of patients from different backgrounds and often times display bias in the delivery of care. The Multicultural Action Center address this issue by highlighting current effective cultural competence standards,

promoting successful programs and institutions, and promoting the implementation of laws such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act which requires providers to ensure that limited English proficient individuals have equal access to services. Furthermore, the Center will provide training and technical assistance to NAMI states and affiliates to ensure that all NAMI programs and services are culturally competent and available to people from diverse communities.

Foster and support NAMI grassroots multicultural advocacy and outreach efforts.

Multicultural Mental Health Symposia –

MAC organized these series of events to build new partnerships and alliances to confront the mental health crisis among *all* diverse communities, raise awareness about mental health issues in minority communities, and identify and highlight minority NAMI leaders. More than 700 mental health advocates from across the nation have participated on these events.

- Coming soon! June 2006, Eliminating Disparities: Multicultural Strategic Summit in Washington, D.C.
- June, 2005, Asian American & Pacific Islander Mental Health Seminar in Austin, TX.
- September, 2004, African Americans: Facing Mental Illness & Experiencing Recovery in Washington D.C.
- June 29th, 2003, American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Symposium in Minneapolis, MN.
- June 2002, Latino Leadership Symposium in Cincinnati, OH.

Outreach Manuals –

The Center has developed five comprehensive manuals to guide NAMI state and affiliate offices through the minority outreach process. These manuals describe the mental health status of the target community, provides a step by step planning guide, offers relevant resources and information for the target community, and highlights NAMI states and affiliates who are successfully reaching out to the target community. These materials are available online at www.nami.org/multicultural.

- Asian American Outreach Resource Manual (2005)
- Working with Congregations to Reach African American Families with Mental Illness (2005)
- African American Outreach Resource Manual (2004)
- Latino Outreach Resource Manual (2004)
- American Indian Outreach Resource Manual (2003)

Trainings and technical assistance –

The Multicultural Action Center offers diversity trainings and outreach consultations to NAMI states and affiliates. Furthermore, the Center works closely with NAMIs from around the country to provide technical assistance and support. We are currently working on the creation of an online data base of NAMI multicultural activities. This online resource will allow users to find multicultural programs in their communities and will allow NAMI state and affiliate offices to learn about successful programs that might be replicable in their communities.

Build diverse leadership at all levels of the organization.

Minority Leadership Working Groups-

An organization's success is based on its leadership. For this reason, the Multicultural Action Center focuses much of its attention on leadership development through NAMI events (Leadership Institute, conferences, national teleconferences, and more), programs, and resources.

We have created 3 leadership groups. These groups have brought together around 100 experienced minority NAMI leaders from across the country and from all areas of the organization. These groups work together to ensure that NAMI and the Multicultural Action Center address the various needs of diverse communities in culturally and linguistically appropriate manners. Furthermore, these groups provide venues for communication and information sharing among leaders. Each group has selected a different area of work to focus on. For all of them, the development of more culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, leadership development training, and minority specific programs are common priorities.

- Latino Experts Group- Currently focusing on the Spanish Family to Family Education Program.
- African American NAMI Leaders Working Group – NAMI membership and leadership survey to assess the involvement of African Americans at NAMI.
- Asian American & Pacific Islander NAMI Leaders Working Group – The need for appropriate materials is a priority. The Group is creating an online Asian American resources web page.

NAMI Leadership Institute Multicultural Scholarships-

The Center provides scholarships for people of color to attend NAMI's top leadership event.

Develop and promote culturally and linguistically competent support programs and practices

Multicultural Action Center Newsletter-

This publication is published 6 times a year. It offers opportunities to highlight NAMI's multicultural work, features culturally competent programs and practices, shares minority mental health news, and information about upcoming diversity programs and useful resources. The newsletter goes out to partner organization and to the Multicultural Action Center's list serve.

Avanzamos! Spanish language newsletter –

This Spanish language newsletter features news from NAMI states and affiliates, research and policy updates, educational resources, personal stories and more. Avanzamos! is distributed free of charge to Spanish speaking mental health advocates around the nation.

Spanish language web site-

On average, this summer the NAMI Spanish language web site was visited 7,000 times a day. This is a dramatic increase from previous months and it reflects the increasing awareness of the Spanish speaking community about NAMI and the resources that we offer.

Resources in other languages-

The Multicultural Action Center has developed several educational resources in Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, and Italian. These resources have proven to be effective outreach tools for NAMI states and affiliates.

Develop strong partnerships with other similar organizations

Multicultural Partner Coalition-

NAMI's Multicultural Action Center is bringing together a cadre of national and international partners to join NAMI and its members in meeting the mental health needs of individuals from diverse communities. The primary role of the NAMI Multicultural Partner Coalition is to support community organizations and NAMI organizations in grassroots activities aimed at addressing mental health needs of racial, ethnic and cultural minority groups. Partner Coalition members also act as advisors to the Center on strategic initiatives and opportunities. Forty seven national and international organizations are part of this Coalition.

Decrease stigma through public education that address specific cultural barriers

Public education and awareness-

In partnership with minority organizations and different media outlets, the Multicultural Action Center is educating the community at large about mental illnesses, symptoms, and treatment. The objective is to help people recognize mental illness and know where to find help.

NAMI's Public Policy Platform 2006

2.3 Cultural Diversity

- (2.3.1) Persons of cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic diversity and those for whom English is not the primary language have unique characteristics that sometimes impede their abilities to benefit fully from existing treatment, training, and rehabilitation programs. These differences must be respected and accorded appropriate representation, both within the governance of the services sector and within NAMI.
- (2.3.2) NAMI supports expanded efforts toward recruitment and training of professionals from these groups, the development and distribution of materials in appropriate languages for use in education, encouragement of their participation in programs and services, and outreach efforts targeted to these grossly underserved groups.

- (2.3.3) NAMI urges the incorporation of ethnic and cultural perspectives and competence into the design and implementation of programs and procedures for persons with brain disorders so that diagnostic evaluations, consumer and family communications, and the provision of treatment and services will be free from bias and cultural impediments.
- (2.3.4) NAMI believes that providers must have training and sensitivity to cultural diversity.
- (2.3.5) NAMI deplores the higher rates among minorities of involuntary commitment and incarceration in penal facilities that occurs among minorities with brain disorders versus non-minorities with similar diagnoses.

3.11 Cultural Competence

NAMI recognizes that people of color face significant additional barriers to mental health treatment. This prevents minorities with mental illness from accessing much needed care. Barriers to treatment, such as lack of language access and lack of cultural competence, must be eliminated.

Treatment plans should be relevant to the consumer's culture and life experiences. Plans shall be developed by providers who have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to provide effective care for diverse populations. For people of color, recovery is more likely to occur when providers are culturally competent and when appropriate, they involve the consumer and family.

Limited English proficient (LEP) individuals must have equal access to mental health treatment. Cross-cultural communication in all services shall be available at all times through bilingual providers or certified interpreters. It is not acceptable to use family members or friends as substitutes for qualified interpreters.