



## NAMI on Campus-John Jay Welcome Guide 2013

Thank you for your interest in NAMI-John Jay (NAMI-JJ). This packet should help explain in a little more detail what we are all about.<sup>1</sup>

### Who are we?

We are a peer-run, student mental health advocacy and education organization. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the largest grassroots organization for mental health in the country; there are local affiliates in most communities across the United States. NAMI-John Jay is one of a growing number of on campus clubs, part of the *NAMI on Campus* program. Along with NAMI-Syracuse University (NAMI-SU) and the Long Island Business Institute, we are one of three such chapters in New York State, and the only chapter in New York City and the City University of New York.

### Why are we at John Jay?

First, here are the facts:

- According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), a little over 25% of Americans (18 and over) live with a diagnosable mental illness—that is about *1 in 4* adults
- 75% of lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 24 (NIMH)
- 1,100 college and university students commit suicide every year, making it the second leading cause of death among college students, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- More than 40% of college students have felt more than an average amount of stress within the past 12 months, according to the American College Health Association (ACHA)
- More than 80% of college students felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year and 45% have felt things were “hopeless” (ACHA)
- 31% of college students have felt so depressed in the past year that it was difficult to function and more than 50% have felt overwhelming anxiety, making it hard to succeed academically (ACHA)
- Without adequate treatment, young adults experiencing a mental health issue are more likely to receive lower GPAs, drop out of college, or be unemployed than their peers who do not have a mental health challenge (US Government Accountability Office)

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<sup>1</sup> This packet idea and some information were adapted from an original version used by NAMI-Syracuse University (NAMI-SU).

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Despite the wide prevalence of mental health conditions, stigma still remains a huge barrier to realizing mental health concerns. We are at John Jay to increase mental health awareness and reduce the stigma of mental illness, particularly among college students. Not only does stigma include negative thoughts and feelings toward those with mental illness, but it can also lead to many real, deleterious effects on an individual level. This may include, for example, an intense shame of seeking treatment and low self-esteem. In 2012, a survey report on student mental health by NAMI found that 64% of young adults who are no longer in college are not attending because of a mental health-related reason. A large number of these students did not access treatment services; **the number one reason for not utilizing these treatment services is concern of stigma.** This stigma can create barriers to treatment and manifest in a number of real-life concerns. As one survey respondent said,

*“It is extremely difficult for students to come out and talk about mental health problems and they may not want to tell you this is why they are falling behind, missing class, seeming disengaged, etc. Please be sensitive and understand mental health problems are ‘real’ problems. Encourage them to find help through the health center and academic advising.”*

NAMI-JJ can be seen as an organization for education, as well as a liaison to the mental health community. We aim to promote help-seeking behaviors and, most importantly, make students aware of the resources around them, both on campus and in their communities.

### What do we do?

It is important to note that NAMI-JJ is not a peer support group or substitution for mental health services. Rather, we provide information and resources to support students' mental health and to empower them to take action on their college campuses. We host meetings and plan a variety of fun (and free) events during the academic year. **Our goal is to promote mental wellness and destigmatize mental illness; increase the campus community's awareness of mental health and relevant services; and provide a forum for the open discussion of mental health-related issues.** With that said, NAMI-John Jay has two main goals: 1) to educate and 2) to advocate. These dual goals are facilitated through a number of activities, including:

- *Guest speakers:* This includes professors, mental health professionals, mental health advocates, authors, journalists, etc.
- *Collaboration:* A large part of our success is dependent on working with other student clubs, campus departments and staff, and local community organizations. The local NAMI-NYC Metro chapter and state NAMI-NYS chapter provides us with many opportunities for growth as a club, including links to mental health services in the community, *In Our Own Voice* presentations, and attendance at conferences for mental health. Some of our recent collaborators at the College include John Jay's Department of Counseling and Peer Counseling Center; the Center for International Human Rights; Active Minds; the Human Services Club; Habitat for Humanity; the Italian Club; and the Psychology Department.

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- *Tabling*: Along with John Jay Peer Counselors in the Department of Counseling, NAMI-JJ spreads the word to the community through tabling. Information is given out regarding setting up an appointment with a counselor; workshops and groups that are being held the Department of Counseling; suicide awareness; and information on a variety of mental health disorders and college adjustment issues, among other topics.
- *Move nights*: We plan on hosting more movie nights for films involving mental health topics. In Spring 2013, we had an open screening of *Silver Linings Playbook* and a discussion following the event.
- *Stress out days*: This event usually happens around midterms or finals. The goal is to have a safe place to relax, practice meditation and mindfulness, and let yourself breathe.
- *Get-togethers*: We have a couple of get-togethers and general meetings throughout the year. This is a place to talk about any comments or ideas you may have, as well as to meet other members.
- *Fundraising/Obtaining funding*: NAMI-JJ works hard to fundraise for a number of mental health causes, including *NAMI Walks*, a walk for mental health awareness in May. We also submit a budget each semester to our campus' Office of Student Life in order to secure money for refreshments at events, advertising, giveaways, promotion, travel, etc.

This Fall 2013 semester, we have several events that we are hosting: a "Meet the Counselor" event with the Department of Counseling and an "In Our Own Voice" event with NAMI, where students will speak on a panel about their mental health experiences, along with mental health advocates and experts. We will also have at least one general meeting and get-together, along with tabling in the Kroll Atrium!

*Tentative event days*: 10/17 (Opening Human Rights event); 11/14 (College and Mental Health Event & IOOV Presentation); 12/2 (Meet the Counselors); 12/10 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights event, panel discussion); 12/12 (end of year wrap-up).<sup>2</sup>

### How to get involved?

NAMI-JJ is open to all. You do not need to be a psychology major, and you do not need to have a mental illness or know someone who does to join. If you are interested in learning more about mental health, getting involved with a campus club, and meeting new people, then you are more than welcome to join us.

First, join us on Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActiveMindsJJ/?bookmark\\_t=group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActiveMindsJJ/?bookmark_t=group). You'll be able to

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<sup>2</sup> Locations and times TBA. Join the email list for up-to-date information!

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find out about all of our upcoming events here. You can also send us an email to be added to our email list ([namijohnjay@gmail.com](mailto:namijohnjay@gmail.com)).

Second, show up. Anyone can be involved. We always need help at bigger events, but we are constantly doing smaller things like tabling, making posters and flyers, and reaching out to different departments and organizations. There are things you can do right away to be involved. Just ask or let us know when you would be available and we can plan something around your availability.

Third, get on the (executive) board. Anyone can come to or help out with events, but we have an e-board that plans and implements these types of things. Any NAMI-JJ regular members may elect themselves to the executive board, and their title becomes "Executive Board Member."

### What is the executive board?

We ask that board members attend all executive board meetings, join and contribute to at least 1 committee position, voice opinions/concerns/suggestions, contribute to the organization of meetings and events and table at events. We have 3 committees, each with a chairperson. The committees are:

- Fundraising: assist in club fundraising, working closely with the Treasurer and helping to manage our budget
- Activities: will maintain close ties with collaborating organizations, forge new ties, and assist in the general planning of club events
- Publicity: will assist in advertising, promoting, and deciding on club giveaways. May also include in-class presentations and tabling.

The duties of these committees are flexible and overlapping, and we are always open to new ideas for positions and committees.

***\*\*\* NAMI-JJ's current executives will be graduating in Spring 2014, so if you are interested in becoming the next President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer, now would be a great opportunity to get involved and shadow us. Elections are in May 2014.***

### Our Hope

We hope to educate the community on various mental health topics, dispel common myths about mental illness, and generate more accurate and positive views toward mental health. We also hope to aid students who are considering seeking out professional resources. **No one should ever be afraid to ask for help.** As executives for NAMI-JJ, we are all very passionate about raising mental health awareness, and hope that other students join us in this endeavor. While you may be studying to become great in your field and have a future where you can make a difference, right here, right now, you can make an immediate impact on not only on your own life, but others as well. We have some really exciting events coming up, and would love for you to join us.

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