

Dear NAMI member:

The 2009 legislative session began on Tuesday, January 6. The state budget crisis is at the top of NAMI's agenda. With a \$5 billion deficit, we must advocate strongly and effectively to simply maintain what we have in the mental health system. Your voice needs to be heard. NAMI is counting on you to be an advocate for mental health issues during this session.

You live in District 1. Your state senator is serving on the Finance and E-12 Education Budget and Policy Committees. Your senator's contact information is:

Senator LeRoy A. Stumpf
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.,
208 Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606
(651) 296-8660

Your senator will be making decisions on issues crucial to NAMI this year. One of these issues is education. NAMI supports summer school eligibility for children in day treatment or residential care. We will push to expand a safe school levy to pay for CIT training for school safety officers. NAMI supports the need to provide grants to transition age youth with mental illness (EBD) based on the Florida TIP model. NAMI also strongly supports the need to establish a statewide policy regarding the use of seclusion and restraint in Minnesota schools.

Another issue of concern is health care. NAMI believes MinnesotaCare should be expanded to cover children who have inadequate or non-existent mental health coverage. We will be pushing for changes in Medical Assistance that would allow foster children who are aging out of the system to continue to be eligible for MA. In order to better serve people with mental illness, NAMI supports creating a loan forgiveness program to increase the number of culturally specific mental health professionals and add licensed professionals as a qualified provider under Medical Assistance.

It is very important that you contact your representative now and throughout the session. Legislators do listen to their constituents. Even if you are not personally affected by proposed legislation, we need you to contact your legislator. To truly create change we need to work as a movement; you need to take action because your voice is needed, not because you are personally affected.

NAMI needs you to send a letter on the issues mentioned above to your representatives this month. Your action is critical due to the severe budget cuts that will be made to balance the state's budget. Under the Governor's proposed budget:

- PCA services will be difficult to obtain for children and adults with mental illness.
- Medical Assistance payments for Mental Health providers will be cut 3%.
- Medical Assistance payments for in-patient psychiatric hospitals will be cut by 6%.
- MinnesotaCare for adults will disappear.
- Fewer people with mental illness will get help with employment.

To learn more about what is happening at the Capitol, subscribe to the NAMI Weekly Legislative Updates, either through NAMI's website at www.namihelps.org or by contacting the office to have it sent to you via regular mail. If you are affected by the issues outlined in this letter and you would be willing to testify at the Capitol, please contact us.

We also strongly encourage you to attend Mental Health Day on the Hill on March 10. The information session is at 10 a.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 105 University West, St. Paul, 55103, and the rally is at noon in the Capitol Rotunda. Please schedule a meeting with your legislator between 1-2 p.m. on that day.

Thank you in advance for your activism. It is only through the grassroots efforts of our members that we will be able to maintain the gains from 2007 and continue to build a mental health system that supports children and adults with mental illness to live full lives in the community.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden
Executive Director