



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Let Your Creativity Shine: Planning Your Campus Event

For NAMI on Campus Clubs



namiOn Campus

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Whether you are planning a small activity or a campus-wide event, having a plan will ensure success. Start your plan by deciding the:

- Size
- Purpose
- Audience
- Location
- Event promotion
- Funding



This resource gets your NAMI on Campus (NOC) club started on planning a successful event!

Size

Helpful Hint: Your first event of the semester should be participating in your campus' school-wide activities or involvement fair. It's a perfect place to get students to sign the #IAmStigmafree pledge!

Smaller Low-Cost Events

- Organize a scavenger hunt – have participants find your campus' student services building or counseling center
- Make cards with positive messages on them – hand them out with candy outside the student union
- Encourage positive body image, stress reduction, or self-care by writing tips on post-it's to put on bathroom mirrors
- Host a board game or trivia night – make it a potluck and ask everyone to bring a snack to share
- Host an arts and crafts night – make cards that you can donate to a local hospital
- Start a community discussion that combats stigma over social media

Mental Health Conditions are Common

- More students are coming to college with mental health concerns.
- 1 in 4 college students lives with a mental health condition.
- More than 20 percent of students report symptoms of depression in the past year that it was difficult to function.
- More than 50 percent of students feel they are functioning academically, risking it hard to succeed academically.
- Suicide remains a huge barrier to getting help.
- Suicide is a major concern on college campuses.

That's where we come in!

What is NAMI on Campus?

Our club works to end stigma, to make it ok to seek help, to make sure everyone knows how to help a friend and to ensure our campus is a welcoming place for everyone.

Whether you have a mental health condition or just want to make a difference in the lives of others, join us as we create a positive, supportive environment for all students.

What do we do?

Our NAMI on Campus club hosts informative and fun events and works with other clubs and organizations on campus to promote mental health awareness and advocacy around mental health conditions. We raise awareness about mental health, its impact on our campus and work in the mental health movement.

Join our club and begin making a difference today! Work with us so that the campus community knows that mental health matters!

Pass out brochures or flyers at your events.

It's a colorful way to provide students with more information about mental health and your club. Find brochure templates on the NAMI on Campus extranet.

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee got dressed up for a de-stressing photo booth. See what costume pieces your members already own and post the pictures on Facebook after the event – everyone can tag their friends and direct traffic to your page!

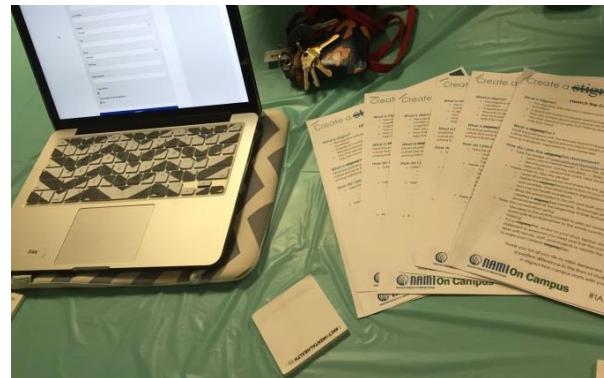


Smaller Low-Cost Events (Continued)

- Host an ice cream social in the spring and a hot chocolate and s'mores social in the fall
- Create a Facebook group where students can share the mental health challenges they have faced— provide information on campus resources and support groups
- Tie dye t-shirts or make friendship bracelets – use mental health awareness colors
- Host a candlelight vigil – honor students who have lost their lives to suicide and talk about suicide prevention
- Invite a [NAMI In Our Own Voice](#) speaker to present on campus
- Promote the [Stigmafree campaign](#) and encourage students to take the #IamStigmaFree pledge
- And so much more! Let your creativity shine

Large & Collaborative Events

- **De-stress Event:** Connect with campus health groups to host a fun event during midterms or finals. Have an outdoor yoga or dance class, host a field day, bring in therapy animals or rent an inflatable game. Invite local businesses to hand out healthy snacks and ask the counseling center to come share their resources with students.
- **Concert, Talent Show, Open-Mic Night:** Plan an event with your music and performing arts school or student performance clubs. Check out your school's policies and work with your NAMI State Organization (NSO) and NAMI Affiliate (NA) to turn the event into a fundraiser.



ABOVE: UC-Merced encouraged 62 students to take the #IAmStigmaFree pledge.

BETWEEN: UNC-Wilmington attached suicide prevention messages to green balloons to display on campus for Mental Illness Awareness Week.



- **Student Mental Health Panel:** Host a panel of students sharing their mental health journeys. Partner with other organizations that have a social justice or wellness focus: LGBT groups, sexual assault awareness groups, veterans' groups, cultural groups, disability awareness groups, peer health educator groups and more.
- **NAMI Walk:** Create a team and participate in a local NAMI Walk. Invite students from other campus clubs to join your team and set a goal for student participation. This gives your club the opportunity to connect with other organizations on campus and NAMI in your community. Go to www.nami.org/walk for info on a walk near you!

Spotlight on Success

University of Maryland, Baltimore County Winter Wonderland Event

- Decorated the union with winter images and positive mental health messages
- Had university staff talk about the mental health resources available on campus
- Invited students to decorate gingerbread houses
- Provided pizza for the 100+ attendees



University of Nebraska, Omaha Contact a Local Newspaper for a Story

- Contacted the [Omaha World-Herald](#) to run a story on the only NAMI on Campus club in the state
- The story was picked up by the [North Platte Telegraph](#) and mentioned in the [Huffington Post](#)



Purpose, Audience & Location

Decide on the activity's purpose, target audience and location.

Purpose: What is your club's main reason for hosting the event? Is it to:

- Recruit new members?
- Raise mental health awareness?
- Support students?
- Promote mental health services?

Stay focused on your goal throughout the planning process to ensure your activity is successful.

Audience and Location: Tailor the activity to the kind of audience and location of the event.

- Make the event relevant – focus on things happening locally or in current events and target specific communities like LGBTQ or cultural organizations
- Make the event prominent – host events in common spaces on campus and promote it wherever you can

Event Promotion

Social Media



- Make a Facebook event page and invite everyone on your friends list
- Come up with a creative hashtag and use it to post about the event
- Create graphics leading up to the event and at the event and post them on Instagram
- Create a YouTube channel and circulate short videos about your event

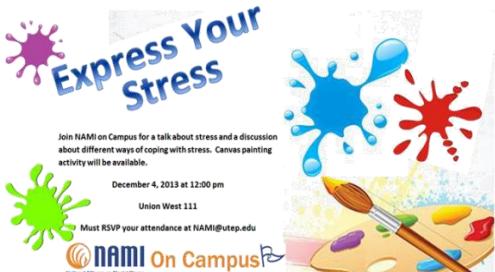
On Campus



UN-Omaha made an Instagram selfie cutout and had it at a tabling event

- Make bold flyers to hang around campus – print in black and white on colorful paper
- Write an op-ed series in the campus newspaper and send email announcements to campus listservs
- Use chalk to write about the event on campus sidewalks – draw some eye-catching pictures and show your artistic talents
- Make a cutout with your social media information and hold a photo booth – have your attendees promote your event for you

Helpful Hint: Check with your school for rules on handing out flyers or hanging them up. Look into restrictions for writing in chalk on sidewalks to promote events.



UTEP made this flyer to promote their stress less painting event. The clean design and bright colors catch people's attention.

Miami-Dade North stands at their awareness and bake sale table – food always catches people's attention!



Florida State University took advantage of high-traffic areas on campus to spread messages of mental health awareness.

Funding

Co-Sponsored Events

A huge benefit of collaboration is the chance to pool your resources.

- Contact the counseling center or psychology department on campus to ask what mental health resources they have that you can hand out at your event
- Reach out to your NSO/NA contact to get involved with one of their events, like a NAMIWalk or health fair. Find out about national or local partnerships that you can tap into for your event. Use your partnership with them to help your club grow!
- Working with other student organizations can increase the amount of funding you receive from the university – you’re working with two budgets instead of one
 - Reach out to Greek Life if your campus has it – you can get funding or volunteers and they can get philanthropy and volunteer hours, a win-win!

Donations /Grants/ Sponsorships

Getting donations from students, sponsorships or grants from businesses or academic departments can help you gather everything you need for the event.

- Get in touch with your NSO/NA contacts to discuss donor relationships and opportunities before you start to fundraise or research grants
- When you collaborate with other clubs and academic departments, and local businesses, discuss what financial support or in-kind supplies they can offer
- Acknowledge donors, sponsors, grants at the event. Offer their name on the banner or t-shirt or a table to promote their organization at the event as an incentive

Helpful Hint: Display a donation box at your club’s events if your campus allows it. Label it with a catchy sign – like “Change for Change” – to get people’s attention. Pocket change adds up!

Reminders

- Invite mental health counselors, disability coordinators, resident directors and campus administrators to your events. This increases your visibility and credibility on campus and gives students a low-stress environment to learn more about available resources.
 - Plan events during national awareness weeks.
 - Mental Illness Awareness Week is the first week of October
 - Suicide Prevention Month is in September
 - National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is last week of February
 - National Mental Health Awareness Month is in May
- There are many more. Many have their own color schemes for the week/month, so use that to grab people's attention.
- Bring information about your club's meetings, a signup sheet to be added to mailing lists, mental health brochures, fact sheets and more to every event.

Additional Resources

- Communicate regularly with your NSO and NA for advice and support
- Explore the NAMI on Campus Leaders NAMINet If you do not have access, contact your NSO and/or NA contact for information on how to gain access
- Email your NSO/NA contacts to share success stories, best practices, fact sheets, pictures and more for them to share in their newsletters or membership news! Your successes will show NAMI members the great things happening on campus and help encourage other clubs to greatness too!
- [Become a NAMI member](#) to receive regular updates, information and resources on mental health conditions, advocacy, upcoming events, opportunities, new research and much more!

Christopher Newport University holds a packed meeting for Mental Illness Awareness Week.



Miami Dade-North "Goes Green" for Mental Illness Awareness Week

Updated January 2019