***Together We Care. Together We Share.* Message Guide** for US-Wide National and NAMI Affiliate use

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|  | About NAMI Support Groups | What’s New | Why It’s Important |
| Headline  | Free, peer-led NAMI Support Groups are safe spaces where individuals can share and gain support if they or a loved one are experiencing mental health issues.  | We have partnered with Kohl’s to expand NAMI support groups across the U.S. and incorporate new trauma-informed and cross-cultural resources, which will be available this fall.  | NAMI support groups offer an opportunity to share your story with others who have similar experiences, access resources and know that you are never alone.  |
| Supporting Points | With 48 state organizations and 648 local affiliates across the U.S., NAMI offers an in-person or virtual support group for you. * [NAMI Connection](https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Support-Groups/NAMI-Connection) is a weekly or biweekly support group for people with a mental health condition.
* [NAMI Family Support Group](https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Support-Groups/NAMI-Family-Support-Group) is a weekly or monthly support group for family members, partners and friends of people with mental illness.
* Both types of support groups are available in Spanish in select areas.

Our free, quality programs are based on proven models that holistically address the challenges of having a mental health condition.[[1]](#footnote-2) * We customize all NAMI programs so you and your loved ones can find what works best.
* We meet you where you are in your journey, in whatever format works best for you — virtual or in-person.
* The NAMI support group model incorporates effective strategies, structures and inclusive language to foster positive and encouraging interactions.
* Hundreds of thousands of people access free NAMI programs every year.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Our support groups are peer-led, meaning the people leading them speak from the perspective of someone with similar experiences. * Support group peer leaders undergo an intensive vetting process and training to receive certification.
* The NAMI support group model provides peer facilitators with skills to manage negative group dynamics that can often alienate some participants.
* NAMI support groups provide a safe setting for people to be heard without judgment, discuss challenges and successes and share healthy coping skills.
 | Kohl’s donated $2 million to NAMI in October 2021 to enhance and expand NAMI support groups across the country. * We’re focused on ensuring NAMI support groups are culturally competent and relevant for communities of color.
* To achieve this, enhancements include updated facilitator skills-building and new implementation guides to help NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates tailor their unique support groups for underreached communities.
* NAMI has also provided grants to multiple state organizations and affiliates across the country to further support capacity building and expand access.

All new facilitation resources will be informed by peer-reviewed literature on best practices in peer-led support groups and feedback from participants, leaders and trainers. * These resources are in development and will be available in Fall 2022.
* NAMI has established an advisory group comprised of 13 individuals across the country to guide these enhancements and any future modifications.

NAMI and Kohl’s share many core values focused on the well-being of individuals and families. * Both of our organizations know few things are one-size-fits-all – clothes and mental health alike.
 | 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year, with 1 in 20 adults experiencing serious mental illness.[[3]](#footnote-4)* With a peer-to-peer, community-based structure, NAMI support groups can help bridge the gap between medical treatment and emotional support.[[4]](#footnote-5)
* Many [studies](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5000855/) have shown that participation in support groups leads to improved mental health outcomes.
* NAMI support groups add to, but do not replace therapy or treatment plans created by mental health professionals.
* NAMI support groups create community and foster connection, leading to a sense of belonging, and support.

These investments bolster existing NAMI support groups and enable us to broaden access and recruit support group facilitators who represent underreached communities.* A critical component of sharing your experience is first feeling safe and supported.

NAMI participants have expressed the groups provide tools to understand their mental health and encourage others, empowering all to build a life that is fulfilling for them.* The NAMI support group model encourages participants to embrace a "group wisdom" mindset to help work through issues that arise during the support group.
* There is strength in sharing among peers — and knowing that everyone’s story is valuable and meaningful.
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| Bottom Line  | Free, quality and peer-led mental health support groups are a space to share your experience, access resources and get support.  |
| Call to Action  | Visit [NAMI.org/SupportGroups](https://nami.org/Support-Education/Support-Groups) to find an in-person or virtual mental health support group near you.  |

**Complementary resources for NAMI National and Field Use:**

* Kohl's Field Announcement TB document has FAQs for field implementation

**About the Campaign for NSONA Awareness: *Together We Care. Together We Share.***

* **Why Now:** Nearly [1 in 5](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness#:~:text=Mental%20illnesses%20are%20common%20in,(52.9%20million%20in%202020).) U.S. adults live with a mental illness, but less than half of those people seek and get the care they need. The pandemic has also exacerbated or uncovered symptoms of mental illness for many individuals given the isolation, stress and societal toll it has inflicted. Persistent stigma or fears of judgment may hinder people from seeking support; this rings especially true in many underreached communities. Free, accessible, peer-led support groups have been available across the U.S. through NAMI for years, but lack broad awareness among target audiences and require trusted facilitators — “people like me” — that will truly drive participation. NAMI is focused on ensuring that their support groups are led with cultural humility so that participants feel safe and supported.
* **Our Audience:** Adults and young adults within the underreached communities, particularly Black, Latino/Hispanic and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.
* **The Goal:** Drive increased participation in NAMI support groups within underreached communities and recruit new support group facilitators within those communities.
* **How We Get There:** Deploy a blend of targeted awareness efforts in select areas where our primary target audiences live and where Kohl’s has a presence while reaching additional audiences across the U.S.
* **The Tagline:** *Together We Care. Together We Share.* is the tagline for this campaign and will be used in campaign materials alongside campaign branding. This tagline speaks to the NAMI x Kohl’s partnership while at the same time alluding to the impact of NAMI support groups. It conveys the power of coming together in community, which can be healing as people gather to share their experiences.
1. NAMI, [Research on NAMI Programs](https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Research/Research-on-NAMI-Programs), accessed May 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. NAMI, Support GRP PR toolkit, accessed May 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. NAMI, [Mental Health By the Numbers](https://www.nami.org/mhstats), accessed May 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Mayo Clinic, [Support groups: Make connections, get help](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/support-groups/art-20044655), accessed May 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)