



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI

An Open Message from the NAMI Board

The NAMI Board is all-inclusive and seeks highly qualified leaders of all backgrounds and experiences to serve on the national board of directors and represent the interests of NAMI's broad coalition. The NAMI Board carefully stewards the NAMI mission and its commitment to build better lives for the millions affected by mental illness. The NAMI Board will lead the organization through an important period of change and growth in the coming years. Individuals with broad experiences who will bring additional leadership, skills and strategic opportunities to the national board and help NAMI move to the next level are encouraged to come forward.

NAMI is in a period growth with revenue increasing by 14% in 2016, 11% in 2017 and a projected increase of 12% in 2018. The NAMI Board of Directors is responsible for driving and managing revenue growth as a fundamental fiduciary duty.

Revenue growth is an indicator of growth in other areas as well – improved systems and infrastructure to support operations in the grassroots and the expansion of programs, and the associated technical assistance, for implementation in local communities.

The NAMI Board of Directors is responsible for articulating the vision for this growth and marrying the vision to decisions that use the revenue growth to maximize NAMI's impact.

Those with knowledge, skills and experiences who can contribute to continued effective leadership for growth and impact are encouraged to come forward.

Given the critical responsibilities as directors of a large nonprofit organization, NAMI Board service requires understanding of the complex legal and fiduciary decisions a board is required to address on a routine basis.

Some prior experiences that lend themselves to successful Board service are:

1. Prior nonprofit and/or corporate board service for other organizations
2. National-level leadership experience, professional or volunteer
3. Service on the Board of a NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate
4. Participation in a NAMI Board Advisory Council

This year, five candidates will be elected to serve three-year terms. Five current Board members' regular terms will expire at the end of June and their seats come up for general election: Two cannot seek re-election; three have served a single term and may or may not seek re-election.

What Expertise and Experience Are Needed

At its core, NAMI's purpose is to create and manage a broad coalition composed of a wide diversity of individuals representing the lived experience of mental illness. NAMI's commitment to invite and include individuals with a wide array of experience honors the backbone of the NAMI movement.

The NAMI Board has undertaken a "Strengths Assessment" this year to identify current Board strengths as well as the areas of skill and experience most needed in 2018 to assist the board in realizing the vision and growth trajectory of the organization. The assessment revealed the following five areas of specific skill or experience important among candidates seeking board service this year:

- Financial Management and Investments, to ensure sound fiscal health
- Fund Raising and Donor Cultivation, to ensure NAMI's future and ongoing viability
- Information Technology, to guide infrastructure development
- Legal expertise, to support fundamental governance responsibilities
- Criminal Justice, to inform decisions related to system interaction and change efforts

To strengthen these five areas, the NAMI Board is asking – for the first time in an election cycle – that each candidate responds in writing specifically about his/her knowledge and expertise in these most highly-desired areas.

NAMI Board Service Commitment

NAMI Board service is an honor and a privilege. For those who earn the opportunity, NAMI Board service must be a top volunteer priority. NAMI Board members must:

- Understand and protect the fiduciary health of the organization
- Understand and adhere to the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of a non-profit board
- Serve a three-year term; with the opportunity to serve two consecutive terms if re-elected
- Attend quarterly meetings of two to three days duration in Arlington, Virginia
- Dedicate time on a weekly basis to NAMI Board service, which may include:
 - service on three standing committees
 - conference calls
 - other work groups as may be needed
 - travel for Board and other meetings
- Make what the individual believes to be a significant financial contribution to NAMI, on an annual basis.

The NAMI bylaws require that a minimum of 75 percent of the board be comprised of persons who have or have had mental illness, or parents or their relatives, including civil and domestic partners. In order to ensure compliance with this requirement, all board candidates are asked to identify if they have had a lived experience of serious mental illness. Given the fact that all board members, currently seated, who have been elected to serve through 2018-19, self-identify under this definition, nominations of those

who do not have lived experience as an individual or as a family member are welcomed to this 2018 election cycle, for board membership to this 2018-2021 term of service.

New This Year for NAMI Elections

The NAMI Board is making some changes to the annual election process this year to ensure sound and fair election practices and to encourage highly-qualified individuals to come forward for board service. Some of these changes include:

- Streamlined and simplified requirements for written statements to be presented to the credentialed voting membership
- All degrees and professional certifications that a candidate wishes to include in his/her profile for presentation to the voting membership will be subject to verification. Any information that cannot be externally validated will not be included in the candidate's profile.
- Candidates will be submitted to a criminal background check. However, data forthcoming from a criminal background check will not disqualify an individual from board service. **Results** of the background check **will remain confidential** and will not be included in the candidate's profile. For more details please refer to [Election Information 2018](#) which can be found at www.nami.org/2018Elections.
- Revised nomination and revised candidate paperwork that commits nominators and candidates to make known any potential conflicts of interest, and to verify (as nominators) or to agree to uphold (as candidates) the ethics and confidentiality policies. These declarations historically have been part of board expectations and continue to be long-standing agreements which board members sign as they are seated on the board.
- Board recommendation of those candidates who are assessed as having the greatest potential to contribute skills and expertise currently needed to complement existing strengths on the board. All **qualified candidates will stand for election**, but all candidates **may not** receive a board recommendation.

When Considering a Nomination

If you have questions about the election process, contact voting@nami.org or visit www.nami.org/voting.

Service on the NAMI Board is a fulfilling experience. We are honored and humbled to represent the members who elected us and we are dedicated to doing the best job possible for NAMI and its vital mission. We invite able and experienced leaders from all walks of life to join us in this remarkable journey—and we thank the thousands of NAMI members who inspire and focus us in our work.

We encourage those who are considering seeking election to contact us. Thank you for all that you do, every day, to support NAMI!