

### Where We Stand:

NAMI believes that all people with mental health conditions deserve access to support that promote wellness. NAMI supports public policies and laws that recognize mental health as an acceptable reason for absence from school.

### Why We Care:

There is no health without mental health, and good health has a clear positive impact on youth and adolescent educational outcomes. Ensuring that students of all ages are healthy and ready to learn when they come to school is important --- as is encouraging them to focus on getting better when they are not well.

Because school is where most children spend much of their time, experiencing challenging periods of mental health also impacts their school life. [One in six](#) youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. Some students are considered at-risk youth, who are [more likely](#) to experience emotional and psychological problems than their peers. Some students may not necessarily have a mental health condition but are having a challenging day or week where their mental health is suffering. For all these students, there are times when their mental health can interfere with school performance or overall functioning.

When students are feeling physically unwell, there is universal understanding that they should stay home and take time to feel better. Our mental health should be treated the same way. School policies that recognize mental health symptoms and treatment as an acceptable reason for absence can help students take the time they need to care for themselves, restore their health and help minimize additional symptoms. This can help normalize the conversation around mental health, which can in turn promote understanding and empathy and create a greater

willingness to seek help if they need more intensive supports.

**NAMI supports public policies and laws that recognize mental health as an acceptable reason for absence from school.**

To reflect this understanding, many states and school boards across the nation have enacted policies allowing approved absences for mental health. Taking time to manage one's mental health without fear of stigma or discrimination is one of many helpful strategies to support youth mental health. It should be normalized and encouraged. NAMI supports school policies that allow students to miss school to manage their mental health needs.

To learn more about NAMI's work on this issue, visit [www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities](http://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities)