

AKA – NAMI Partnership Activity Planning Guide



2015

The new AKA – NAMI partnership provides our organizations the opportunity to come together and raise much needed mental health awareness in African American communities across the country. This guide provides ideas of the types of activities AKA Chapters and NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates could implement in order to help educate the community about mental health.

Good luck!

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Background

Starting in 2015, [Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.](#) and [NAMI](#), the National Alliance on Mental Illness, are working together to increase mental health awareness in the African American community. This partnership is part of AKA's 2014-2018 International Program, Launching New Dimensions of Service, and NAMI's efforts to build a national movement.

About Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (AKA) was established at Howard University in 1908. AKA is the nation's oldest sorority and was founded by college trained African American women. It's motto is "service to all mankind." The sorority's membership is comprised of more than 55,000 active college trained women from diverse backgrounds, in more than 950 chapters, providing volunteer service to local communities in the United States and abroad.



To find the AKA Chapter in your area go to <http://ow.ly/GoAPX>.

About NAMI

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI embraces people living with mental health conditions and their families who are often isolated. NAMI offers understanding and support unique to those who are affected by these conditions.



To find the NAMI Affiliate in your area go to <http://ow.ly/GoBbp>.

To find the NAMI on Campus Club in your area go to <http://ow.ly/HPp4H>.

About the Partnership

This partnership is designed to raise mental health awareness in order to improve the quality of life for African American individuals and families who are impacted by mental health conditions.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Chapters will work with NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates to:

- Expand community outreach efforts to educate African Americans about mental health, treatment and recovery.
- Share information about available support services for individuals and families affected by mental health conditions.

To achieve these goals, our joint efforts will focus on the following four areas:

- AKA/NAMI awareness event (April 11): Events could include walks, presentations and other activities that AKA chapters can engage in.
- Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month (July): Both organizations will host events at their national conventions.
- Mental Illness Awareness Week: (October 4 – 11): AKA chapters will create and engage in local activities designed to raise awareness about mental illness on campus. Members will use traditional and social media to get the word out.
- Ongoing activities: AKA's undergraduate chapters will organize events similar to NAMI's offering in their respective areas and may collaborate with NAMI on Campus clubs® and local NAMIWalks.

AKA Chapters and NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates are encouraged to reach out to each other in order to implement the partnership at the local level. Success depends on mutual collaboration and on establishing strong relationships among AKA chapters and NAMI Affiliates. The partnership focuses on what both organizations can do together to reach and engage local communities around mental health topics while engaging each other in a meaningful relation.



Collaboration Opportunities in 2015

July: Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

In 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives proclaimed July to be [National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#) in honor of Bebe Moore Campbell, an accomplished author, advocate, AKA member and co-founder of NAMI Urban Los Angeles. This Month was established to enhance mental health awareness in diverse communities. Bebe Moore Campbell received NAMI's 2003 Outstanding Media Award for Literature for the book [Sometimes My Mommy Gets Angry](#), written especially for children, about a young girl who learns how to cope with her mother's bipolar illness. In 2005, her novel [72-Hour Hold](#) focused on an adult daughter and a family's experience with the onset of mental illness. Bebe Moore Campbell passed away in 2006 after a battle with brain cancer. Find more information and coverage of Bebe Moore Campbell's awareness-building efforts [here](#).

Oct. 4-10: Mental Illness Awareness Week

In 1990, the U.S. Congress established the first full week of October as [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#) (MIAW) in recognition of NAMI's efforts to raise mental illness awareness. Since then, mental health advocates across the country have joined with others in their communities to sponsor activities, large or small, for public education about mental illness. MIAW coincides with the [National Day of Prayer](#) for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding (Oct. 7) and [National Depression Screening Day](#) (Oct. 9). MIAW activities vary by NAMI State Organization and NAMI Affiliate. In some cases, activities may occur several days before or after the formal week, particularly if multiple events are planned.

Additional Opportunities

In addition to the four focus areas, NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates participate in the following activities:

May: Mental Health Month

During the month of May, NAMI and other organizations raise mental health awareness around the country. In 2013, President Obama proclaimed May as [National Mental Health Awareness Month](#), bringing the issue of mental health to the forefront of our nation's thoughts. Celebrations include [Children's Mental Health Awareness Week](#), May 3-9.

NAMIWalks

As [NAMIWalks](#) celebrates its 13th Anniversary in 2015, we are proud to be the largest and most successful mental health awareness and fundraising event in America. Through NAMIWalks' public, active display of support for people affected by mental illness, NAMI is changing how Americans view persons with mental health conditions. There are walks all over the country. Visit www.namiwalks.org to find a site near you.

Suggested Activities

AKA Chapters and NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates can come together and organize all types of events, big and small, to raise mental health awareness in the African American community during the celebrations identified above. The type and size of event is up to you, your goals and your resources.

This section provides a list of events you can organize, tips and strategies to help you address stigma and a questionnaire to help you choose the right event for you. Additionally, you can find an [event-planning worksheet](#) on page 13 of this guide.

Activity Ideas:

- If you have a newsletter, blog or other type of electronic publication, make sure to [include articles on African American mental health](#) and to mention that you are celebrating the month (don't forget to highlight the AKA – NAMI partnership).
- **Start a multicultural mental health book club.** Recommended books include:
 - *72-Hour Hold* by Bebe Moore Campbell
 - *Sometimes My Mommy Gets Angry* by Bebe Moore Campbell
 - *I Am Not Sick. I Do Not Need Help* by Xavier Amador
 - *Black Pain: It Just Looks Like We're Not Hurting* by Terrie Williams
 - *Standing in the Shadows: Understanding and Overcoming Depression in Black Men* by John Head

If you order your books through the [NAMI store's Amazon.com link](#), a percentage of your purchases will benefit NAMI.

- **Donate books** related to multicultural mental health to your local library. You can also offer to host a mental health information session or ask for a display booth.
- Ask your elected civic leaders and local legislators to join you in showing **public support for your effort** by signing [a proclamation](#) (use our sample proclamation available at www.nami.org/akaresources).
- Organize a mental health awareness **contest** and invite people to submit original/interesting stories or art (e.g., plays, poems, blog entries, short videos, photos, songs, etc.) on recovery, mental health and other related topics. You can also organize an art exhibit, talent show or concert showcasing all of the submissions.
- Organize a [faith-oriented event](#) where you discuss mental health in your place of worship or from a faith perspective.
- **Go Green in May.** [Join the Green Light Initiative](#) to show support and raise awareness for mental health. The green light is meant to start a conversation and inspire hope.
 - During this month, buildings and landmarks are lighting up green. Utilize connections you may have in your community to get buildings illuminated in your town or city. When in doubt reach out to PR or media departments of organizations or companies or contact local officials.
 - Hand out or sell green ribbons for people to wear.
 - Contact local businesses and government to see about placing green ribbons throughout your community on trees, light posts, columns and in other public spaces.
 - Wear green. Be creative; don't just limit this to your everyday wardrobe. Wear green shoelaces, a green suit, dye your hair green or paint your fingernails.
 - Initiate a "Wear Green Day." Pick a day during the month to wear green to spread the word about mental health.
 - Participate in a NAMIWalk—and wear green!
 - Share your photos of your activities using #hopestartswithyou on Twitter or Facebook or submit your pictures to [YANA](#) (You are not Alone) or on our [Facebook](#) page.
- **Go public!** Reach out to general and African American-specific media outlets. Pitch personal stories about recovery. Use NAMI's [PR and Marketing toolkit](#) and sample press releases to help plan your media strategy.
- Find out whether there are any **multicultural events** going on in your community or on campus (e.g., fairs, festivals, block parties, luncheons, parades, etc.), and sign up to have a booth where you can provide free mental health information.

- Hold a **candlelight vigil** to honor and call attention to those who have died by suicide.
- **Host an educational event.** Examples include:
 - A **panel** to present important information on mental health and available community services. Have a variety of different perspectives on this panel. You could include a mental health professional, a person living with a mental health condition, a person that has a loved one with a mental health condition, among others. Have the presenters share their lived experiences and underscore the importance of mental health awareness in the African American community.
 - A **Mental Health Awareness breakfast** featuring invited influential community leaders who will discuss how to address mental health problems in diverse communities.
 - A **movie or video clip screening**, followed by a discussion panel.
 - Suggested movies: NAMI offers screening guides for [Frankie & Alice](#) (2014) and [Call Me Crazy](#) (2013) that feature mental health in a holistic or positive way. You can find more information about *Call Me Crazy* [here](#). Other good options include *Home* (2014), *The Soloist* (2009) and [Documenting Our Presence: Multicultural Experiences of Mental Illness](#).
 - Suggested videos: NAMI's [African-American Recovery Perspectives](#)
 - NAMI programming, such as presentations featuring **NAMI In Our Own Voice, NAMI Sharing Hope or Say it Out Loud.**

[NAMI In Our Own Voice \(IOOV\)](#) is a 90-minute interactive presentation and Q&A session that uses speaker stories to illustrate the individual realities of living with mental illness. Contact your local NAMI to see if IOOV is available in your state or community.

NAMI's [Sharing Hope](#) is an hour long presentation for African American communities on mental health, treatment and recovery given by a person living with a mental health condition and a family member. Any NAMI State Organization and Affiliate is allowed access to the Sharing Hope Materials. Simply fill out and submit the [Materials Release Agreement](#).

NAMI's [Say it Out Loud](#) provides faith-based and community leaders everything they need to host a facilitated discussion with the teens in their community about mental health. The toolkit provided on the website includes everything you need for the event, including a narrated presentation to inform the adult leader about

teen mental health, a guide for discussion with questions to get the conversation started, a short film featuring the ten warning signs and three youth sharing their stories and fact sheets for further learning. Any faith-based or community leader can facilitate these discussions.

Campus-specific Events

Most of the activities above can be done on campus. Here are a few additional ideas for colleges and universities:

- [Raising Mental Health Awareness](#) is a toolkit that includes everything you need to raise awareness about mental health conditions on your college campus. We've developed a dynamic presentation, guide for presenting, fact sheets, resource templates and more!
- Put posters across campus — decorate your campus with positive mental health messages, such as “Mental Health Matters” or “You are Not Alone”. This will let others on your campus know more about mental health and where to find resources. Go to www.nami.org/akaresources for posters and other graphics you can use.
- Check to see if there is a [NAMI on Campus](#) club and/or an AKA chapter at your school. Partner with them to bring awareness to the entire campus. NAMI has also launched the #Act4MentalHealth campaign so that you can work with your NAMI on Campus club and/or AKA chapter to raise awareness about all the ways you work to make mental health matter.

Tips to Organize a Successful Event

Tips and Strategies to Address Stigma

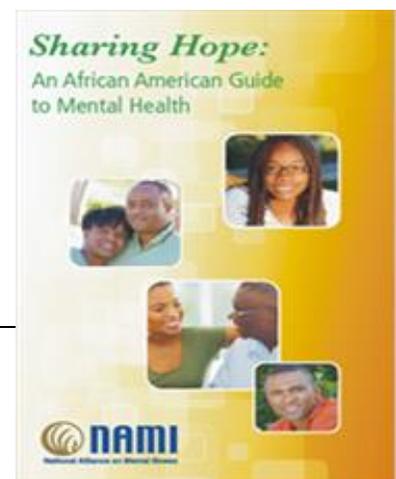
Mental health stigma is particularly high in the African American community. People often feel uncomfortable talking about mental illness and may not want to engage in a mental health activity due to personal stigma and fear of being seen at such events.

Be aware of stigma when planning your activities and events. Below are some tips and strategies that can help you introduce mental health topics in a sensitive and nonthreatening way.

- Look for topics that are interesting and relevant to your community (e.g., healthy living and mental health, how to be a better parent, how to achieve healthy mind/body balance, etc.).
- Cover mental health-specific information as part of your event, but also make sure you cover the topic(s) that is/are important to the group. You may not get to provide as much mental health-specific information this way, but you will get more people to participate, and you will be making the connection between what they care about and mental health.
- While your event should focus on providing information on mental health conditions, treatment, recovery and other related topics, give your event a theme that will resonate with the community. For example, label it as a wellness or mental health event rather than an event about mental illness.
- Approach the topic from a wellness or whole health perspective.
- Sometimes when we want to educate the public about mental health, we feel obligated to host serious events. A mental health awareness event does not always have to be serious. Try to make it fun if possible.
- To make participants feel more comfortable, emphasize that mental health impacts everyone. Tell them that while they may not need the information personally, it can still be beneficial to their community.
- Underscore that the information you will share can help participants help themselves and their loved ones.
- Address up front the discomfort the topic can cause.
- Share personal stories of people living with mental health conditions or of their loved ones - they have a very strong impact.
- Guided conversations, group sharing and storytelling work well as vehicles for addressing mental health in this community.

Planning Tips

- Host the event in an accessible and familiar setting for your community.
- Fun, family-oriented events such as picnics, flash mobs and talent shows can attract many participants. Take the



opportunity to offer some information about the importance of mental health for the whole family.

- Order bulk copies of NAMI brochures at the NAMISStore (www.nami.org/store). A very good option to consider is [*Sharing Hope: An African American Guide to Mental Health*](#).
- We have created a variety of fact sheets for you to print and distribute at your events. These materials are available at www.nami.org/akaresources.
- Be sure to take photos at the events you host, and use them through traditional and social media outlets to increase your reach.

Language: The Importance of What We Say

The language we use to promote our events and talk about mental health is very important due to the high levels of stigma associated with mental health conditions. Use language the community feels comfortable with. Thankfully, we know from past experience some of the terms and phrases that resonate with African Americans when talking about mental health conditions.

Words to Avoid (and Words to Use)!

Here is a list of words to avoid with suggestions of what to use instead. We suggest avoiding these words or phrases since they do not resonate with the community, can be seen as offensive or turn people away.

Avoid Using	Use Instead:
Mental illness	Mental health condition Mental health problem Mental health
Identifying a person by his or her illness (e.g., Jenny is a schizophrenic)	Person's name
Suffer (e.g., Jim is suffering from depression)	Lives with Has (e.g. Jim has depression)
Mentally ill	People who have mental health conditions

Crazy, loony, nuts, psycho, etc.	People who have mental health conditions
Killed himself	Died by suicide

A person is bigger than any illness and should not be defined solely by it. A mental health condition is only one aspect of a person’s life. When referring to individuals or mental health, never define anyone by her diagnosis or condition. Always use an optimistic and supportive tone. The words we use can influence audiences in positive and negative ways. At NAMI, we value empowering language that avoids labeling individuals living with mental health conditions.

Make sure to download the NAMI editorial style guide at www.nami.org/akaresources for more information.

Choose the Right Event for You

The following questions can help you determine the best event for you:

1. What do you hope to achieve with your event (what is the goal)?
2. What type of event do you want to have (e.g., formal, informal, arts-related, family-oriented)?
3. Who would be your target audience (e.g., adults, families, young adults, etc.)?
4. How much will the event cost? (You don’t need the exact amount, just have a general idea of the amount of funding you will need.) Do you have funding for the event? If not, who will procure it?
5. How much time do you have to plan the event?
6. Who will help you plan and execute the event?
7. Are there any organizations you should partner with besides AKA or NAMI?
8. When do you want to hold the event? Are there any other similar events happening around this time?

Branding Guidelines

AKA and NAMI developed an official logo and graphics to promote AKA – NAMI efforts. Be sure to download and use these materials since it will help with the partnership’s visibility, consistency and professionalism. Here are a few useful branding guidelines when you are developing content:

- ✓ Make sure the logo is in the correct color and format
- ✓ The logo should not be distorted or skewed
- ✓ Try to make photos reflect diversity
- ✓ Make the message as clear as possible
- ✓ Language usage should be appropriate for the audience
- ✓ Do not use stigmatizing language



Resources

NAMI has developed a variety of useful resources for AKA Chapters and NAMI State Organizations and Affiliates. All resources are available for download at www.nami.org/akaresources.

Materials include:

- Electronic templates such as proclamations and press releases.
- Graphics and marketing materials including the official logo of the partnership, social media badges and flyers.

- Mental health fact sheets
- Social media posts for Facebook and Twitter.

Event Planning Worksheet

Goal (What do you want to accomplish?):

Target(s) (Who are you aiming to reach?):

Activity lead(s):

Partners Who is involved or can be approached to aid in the success of this activity?	
Objectives Specific actions for reaching your main goal	
Key Message(s) Main messages to be made with this effort, phrases to be used in marketing, etc.	
Timing Timeline for planning and when specific event(s) take place	
Resources What available printed and web-based materials you can utilize, and what needs to be created for this activity (promotion, production, leave-behinds, etc.)	
Budget Cost of activity(ies) and available funding	
Follow-up actions Evaluation, connecting with further opportunities, etc. How will you know whether you have achieved your goal?	

