



# Boulder County

## Mission Statement

To provide support, education and advocacy for individuals and families impacted by mental illness, by which we will reduce stigma, instill hope, and generate change.

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If you are interested in becoming a board member of NAMI Boulder County, please contact us at 303-443-4591.

## President's Corner



Greetings!

We've had much activity since our annual meeting in June where we updated our bylaws, elected new members to the board and subsequently elected new officers. I am honored to serve on the board as President.

In early August, the board met to reaffirm our Mission and to discuss our Strategic Plan. Our Mission is to provide support, education and advocacy for individuals and families impacted by mental illness, by which we will reduce stigma, instill hope, and generate change. We established five committees to facilitate our plan: Education, Support Groups, Advocacy, Outreach and Fundraising, and Resources and Communication. We will provide updates on our progress in future newsletters and invite NAMI members to become involved if you are so moved.

Anna Kim attended the NAMI National Convention in late June and brought back an adage that we found rings true, "NAMI is the best kept secret in helping others to navigate through the mental health system, and we need to become the best-known resource". A key area that we aim to improve over the next couple of years is to make sure that we aren't a secret to Boulder and Broomfield Counties.

We recently joined both the Boulder and the Metro North Chambers of Commerce and have representation at local events. This allowed us to have a table at a recent 9News Health Fair and allows opportunities to meet with business and community leaders at other local events to share our message and mission. We will communicate opportunities to volunteer as we continue working on increasing our public exposure.

The 40th Anniversary Celebration was a fantastic success. We were honored to have some of the original members of NAMI in attendance as well as a great keynote speaker in District Attorney Michael Dougherty.

Finally, Tuesday, November 6 is Election Day. While each election is important, it seems that recent events add a sense of urgency in making sure that all of us participate in the electoral process. Please take the time to learn about each candidate and ballot item and exercise your right to vote! Boulder County Issue 1A has a direct impact on mental health. Board Member Phoebe Norton's guest opinion was published in the Daily Camera on behalf of NAMI Boulder County and can be found on page 3 in this newsletter. Vote yes on 1A.

John Stringfellow, President, NAMI Boulder County

## THANK YOU to everyone who supported and attended our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration!



### We had several inspiring speakers

**Boulder County District Attorney, Michael Dougherty** – Standing together as a community to improve mental health services for those who are involved in the criminal justice system.

**Mental Health Partners CEO, Hans Wiik** – [Young Minds Matter](#). Parents, educators, peers and community members can provide support and guidance to teens and emerging adults in midst of a changing and complicated modern world. [Be 1 of 4098](#).

### Barbara Hancock, one of our original members and a current board member wrote a beautiful history of NAMI Boulder County that was shared with attendees, excerpt below.

40 Years Ago...

In the late 70's, in a spontaneous movement across the U.S., struggling families began to find each other and to form support groups. Mary Jean Willis, our founder, attended the very first support group for families in Marin County, CA and came home inspired to start a group in Boulder. She enlisted the help of two therapists at Boulder County Mental Health Center (now Mental Health Partners) and friends Mary Maslin and Harriet Newton to start finding other families needing help. Braving stigma, the three mothers wrote a commentary for The Daily Camera, announcing a series of 12 free classes for families of adult children with a mental illness and FFAMI (Families and Friends of the Adult Mentally Ill) was born. The early focus was on adults with schizophrenia and psychosis-related conditions, a group labeled by professionals at that time as “the chronically mentally ill”.

Finally, families were finding each other and able to have the gut level conversations they had been longing for. The relief and bonding that occurred made it feel that we really were one family. We were “families helping families”, a truly grassroots movement.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is now the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. We are proud to be the Boulder County chapter of NAMI, and are working hard to improve the lives of those who are affected by mental illness and their families in our community. We offer free support groups and educational classes, we advocate at the local and national level, and we connect people to the resources they need for recovery and wellness.

### Thank you!

We would like to thank all of the wonderful individuals, families, and organizations who have been a part of NAMI Boulder County over the last 40 years. Together we will continue reduce stigma, instill hope, and generate change.

## Please vote YES on Boulder County Item 1A for an Alternative Sentencing Facility and Jail Modernization

By Phoebe Norton, Board Member, NAMI Boulder County



The fact that 40% of the people in our jail suffer from a mental illness is extremely concerning.

Do we have a shortage of psychiatric hospital beds and intensive residential treatment beds for people with mental illness regardless of their ability to pay? Yes!

Do we need more community based comprehensive services for people with mental illness and/or substance abuse regardless of their ability to pay? Yes!

Do we need alternatives to jail for low risk offenders, many of whom have mental illness and or substance abuse? Yes!

Do we need a secure, humane environment for higher risk offenders who have mental health and health needs but cannot be released from jail? Yes!

This is not an either - or situation. We need all of the above. This ballot measure addresses part of these needs in a very significant way that will help many people with mental illness and or substance abuse that are currently in jail.

Our jail was built in 1987 for 287 inmates when our Boulder County population was 219,024. The estimated population of Boulder County in 2018 is over 322,500.

Today, by slightly expanding some areas and double bunking many inmates, the jail is able to serve 500 people. However we only have 15 cells for observing people on suicidal watch. Approximately 800 people were admitted to the jail in the past year that were suicidal so, on average, we needed over 20 suicidal watch cells per day. Our jail does have mental health professionals who assess and treat people with mental illness and/or substance abuse. However, our jail is so crowded that there is practically no place for them to provide services.

This ballot measure does not increase the size of our jail but will reduce the over crowding by building a more open, Alternative Sentencing Facility on the County campus next to the jail and Mental Health Partners' 24 - Hour Walk-In Center and Crisis & Addiction Services. The Alternative Sentencing Facility will divert low risk offenders, many of whom have mental illness, from the jail and provide a continuum of mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Employed people in the Alternative Sentencing Facility will be able to maintain their employment and contributions to the community. Others may participate on work crews to help private non-profit or governmental agencies.

Low level offenders and especially those with mental illness often get worse when mixed with a higher risk population. This is a more humane and cost effective solution that will help people recover. The cost of an Alternative Sentencing Facility day will be \$40 while the cost of a jail day is \$132.

In addition to supporting this measure, we need to lobby the State of Colorado to provide more recovery-oriented psychiatric beds, especially for people waiting for competency evaluations who may be waiting in jail for 90 days or more. We need to continue to lobby the State of Colorado to restore and increase funding for community based intensive services for people of all ages with mental illness and/or substance abuse regardless of their ability to pay.

Voting YES on 1A is an important step in the right direction and will help many people with mental illness.

## Andrew Romanoff Addresses Mental Health at NAMI Colorado State Conference



On Saturday, October 20, members of NAMI Boulder County attended the NAMI Colorado State Conference and Annual Membership Meeting in Denver. The conference was attended by members from across the state and presentations covered such topics as mental health and the criminal justice system, the realities of seeking SSDI/SSI, public policy, and outreach. We will be working to share more of the information with our members on our website and in future communications,

but want to share the highlights of the keynote presentation here.

The keynote speaker at the NAMI Colorado State Conference was Andrew Romanoff, the president and CEO of Mental Health Colorado, who presented on the current state of mental health in Colorado. He started with a sobering fact: according to the *State of Mental Health in America 2018*<sup>1</sup> report, Colorado ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for mental health care, and 48th in youth mental health. Romanoff, along with Mental Health Colorado and organizations like NAMI, are working to change this through several strategies. One of the most important areas of focus is de-stigmatizing mental illness in our communities. “What is the best way to de-stigmatize mental illness?” Romanoff asked. “Meet someone with mental illness.” Much of the stigma comes from misinformation and misunderstanding, and education and outreach by organizations like NAMI are key to reducing the stigma that surrounds us.

Another important area of focus is enforcing equal coverage for mental health conditions, which under the parity law are required by insurance companies to be treated the same as physical health conditions. A fundamental piece of this is consumer education, as many people do not realize that these laws exist and they have more rights than they realize. “We need people to know their rights” said Romanoff. Mental Health Colorado is working with legislators and the insurance industry to find solutions to the problems with mental health care coverage in Colorado, and they need personal stories to show the reality of the current situation. If you or your loved one have ever been denied mental health care in Colorado, please consider sharing your story through their survey at <https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/survey/>.

It is also important to know where your representatives stand on mental health issues, and to vote for those who are dedicated to making improvements. To help with this, Mental Health Colorado put out a survey to all candidates running for state legislature and governor. Survey results can be viewed on their website at <https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/election2018/>. Having representatives who actively support mental health initiatives is critical to changing the current state of mental health care in Colorado. As Romanoff says, “We need to prevent and treat mental health issues rather than ignore and criminalize them.” If you would like to join Mental Health Colorado in advocating for mental health care, you are invited to join their statewide network of advocates called the Brain Wave. Learn more and sign up at <https://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org/take-action/>.

Together we can bring about change in the system of care for mental health in Colorado.

(Editorial note, consumers can find more information and submit complaints at <https://www.parityregistry.org/>).

1. “The State of Mental Health in America.” Mental Health America, 1 Aug. 2018, [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america).

## A Note from Our Program Director, Helen Todd



**We need volunteers to become Support Group Facilitators. Training dates:**  
 Connections Recovery Support – Nov 3-4.  
 Family Support Group – Nov 17-18.  
 Call me at 720.543.2711 for questions or to sign up.

Support Group continues to provide much needed help to those come through our doors on Wednesday evenings in Lafayette. These groups allow your voice to be heard and encourage empathy, productive discussion and a sense of community. These **FREE Support Groups** meet every Wednesday, 7:00–8:30 pm at 715 Cabrini Drive in Lafayette, Immaculate Conception Church.



NAMI Family Support Group is for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental illness. You'll benefit through other's experiences and discover your inner strength.

[Family Support Video](#)



NAMI Connection is a free, peer-led support group for adults living with mental illness. You will gain insight from hearing the challenges and successes of others. Recovery is a journey, and there is hope!

[Connections Video](#)

## NAMI Education Programs

Basics and Family-to-Family education programs are taught by NAMI-trained facilitators with lived experience. They know what you are going through because they have been there. Classes include presentations, discussion and interactive exercises. These programs provide critical information and strategies for taking care of the person you love while taking care of yourself, managing crises, handling stress, communicating effectively, learning about mental illnesses and medications, and much more. You'll come to discover that you are not alone. Email [htodd@namibouldercounty.org](mailto:htodd@namibouldercounty.org) to **register for our next session of classes which begin in February 2019.**



NAMI Family-to-Family is a free, 12-session educational program for family of people living with mental illness. You will experience compassion from people who understand your situation. This program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to an individual living with a mental health condition. Watch the Family-to-Family video at [www.nami.org/f2f](http://www.nami.org/f2f)



NAMI Basics is

a free, 6-week education program for parents and family caregivers of children and teens who are experiencing symptoms of a mental illness or have already been diagnosed. You'll learn the facts about mental health conditions and how best to support your child at home, at school and when they're getting medical care. Basics video at [www.nami.org/basics](http://www.nami.org/basics)

## Addressing the Stigma of Mental Illness

*By Joy Redstone*



Mental illness runs in my family. Those are hard words to write, for many reasons, but this statement begs the question of who I'm talking about. This column is about the enduring stigma of mental illness, but even writing those words may invite a level of scrutiny and judgment. I won't name those that suffer, as it is theirs to claim their invisible identity. But it is painful to love them when they cry themselves to sleep at night, lash out in violence, or say hateful things. All you can do is to hold steady.

There is little comfort to offer when they are lost in the darkness, your presence a distant reminder that they are not alone. Maybe all you can do is to offer a mirror held up to them that captures some part of their beauty and brilliance when they are well. I do not name them because in our culture people with mental illness are perceived as weak and flawed. One doesn't have to look very far into movies, social media or even daily conversation for the ugly mocking stereotypes to be heard. There's not a person among us who wants to be seen as broken.

Mental illnesses are diseases of isolation. They are illnesses that cause loneliness, as depression's insidious voice whispers of worthlessness. Trauma's refrain is that of terror and distrust. And psychosis inalterably changes thoughts, communication and appearance to the point that families grieve the loss of the person they once knew. Not only do they cause loneliness, their very genesis may lie in isolation, for only in secrecy do addiction and abuse flourish. The ultimate experience of alone-ness is the despairing thought that their self-inflicted deaths will not affect others, often a desolate falsehood.

If the crux of all these illnesses is to be alone, it makes sense that the solution is community. Community comes in many forms; both formal and informal methods of treatment exist, but the simplest place to start is a shift in our dialogue that acknowledges the resilience it takes to combat these illnesses. This is why addressing stigma is so important. Until we offer acceptance, our family members, friends, and loved ones remain mired in shame and are less likely to get help. Stigma affects both the individual's decision to seek help and the availability of the help. When a person believes society's message about their defectiveness, they assume that their suffering is their fault. Shame immobilizes and overwhelms. When we view mental illness as a result of personal weakness, we do not put the resources into this endemic public health challenge. Despite the enormous cost of crisis services, lost wages, disability, and sheer human suffering, we have not funded mental health services in our state or county in such a way that treatment is accessible.

What can you do? You can be aware of your language. You can speak of those who "suffer with" a mental illness instead of calling them "a schizophrenic" or any of the many other common slang terms. You can make sure your insurance company honors the parity laws and speak up for yourself when they don't. You can acknowledge your own mental health vulnerabilities if they exist, for you will give others courage if you do. And, please, tell the stories of recovery. Too often, we tell only the stories of tragedy and loss. Speak about recovery, yours and that of your loved ones. Perhaps it may be a story of stumbles and sidetracks, but it's not just you that needs the stories of overcoming. We need it, too. Hope is the most mysterious and powerful element of recovery. It's an act of generosity to share your story, for in doing so you kindle hope in others. There are many who have kept my hope alive over the years, and many of them have no idea of their impact. So, here's hoping that the family members I love will experience acceptance, self-acceptance, recovery and resilience.

## We Are Looking for Volunteers!

Are you interested in showing your support for mental health in our community? Want to make connections with others? Sign up to be a NAMI Boulder County Volunteer! Two areas where we need help currently are:

1. **Public Policy Committee.** The NAMI Colorado Public Policy Committee (PPC) meets approximately twice per month during the legislative session (January – May), reviewing introduced legislation and at times taking a position and advocating for that position at the State Capitol. NAMI Boulder County members can join the committee or support it by sharing their stories which help illustrate the reason for the committee’s position on key issues.
2. **Outreach Committee.** The NAMI Boulder County Outreach Committee organizes and facilitates local mental health events in the Boulder area. Volunteers are needed to help plan upcoming events, share event information within the community, and staff the events. Those who want to be involved on a regular basis and those who want to volunteering for a single-event are welcome!

Sign up to volunteer at <https://namibouldercounty.org/volunteer-sign-up>

## Upcoming Community Events

**Mental Health Partners: Be 1 of 4098.** Suicide prevention trainings that empower communities by providing valuable information that is easy-to-understand and convenient to access. Four expert-led trainings are available October through December. Sign up at [www.mhpcolorado.org/training](http://www.mhpcolorado.org/training).

**Young Minds MATTER Lecture Series.** A community lecture series focusing on teens and emerging adults’ mental health, and how parents, educators, peers and community members can provide support and guidance. Pre-register for upcoming lectures in November and January at <https://www.mhpcolorado.org/community/lecture-series/>.

**Youth Mental Health First Aid.** This course teaches participants the risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges that are common among adolescents and young adults. November and January in Lyons and Boulder. Find more information and sign up at <http://www.mhfacolorado.org/findclass>.

**Adult Mental Health First Aid.** Essential first aid training for anyone age 18 and older who wants to learn how to help a person who may be experiencing a mental health related crisis or challenge. Available in English and Spanish, November through January in Longmont. Find more information and sign up at <https://www.longmontcolorado.gov/departments/departments-a-d/community-services-department/supporting-action-for-mental-health/mental-health-first-aid>.

## Support Groups in Boulder County

### **NAMI Family Support Group**

Free drop-in support for family members and loved ones of individuals living with a mental illness. Meets every Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm. 715 Cabrini Drive in Lafayette. Call Helen at 720.543.2711 or email [htodd@namibouldercounty.org](mailto:htodd@namibouldercounty.org).

### **NAMI Connections Recovery Support Group**

Free drop-in support for adults living with mental illness. Provides a place for respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope. Meets every Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm. 715 Cabrini Drive in Lafayette. Call Helen at 720.543.2711 or email [htodd@namibouldercounty.org](mailto:htodd@namibouldercounty.org).

### **Together Against Addiction - Teen group**

This FREE teen group is on Tuesdays, 4:00 pm at Naropa Community Counseling, 3400 Table Mesa, Suite 102, Boulder. Call 303.546.3589.

### **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance**

Meets Wednesdays 6-8pm at the Longmont Perkins restaurant. 2nd Wednesdays in Firestone at Carbon Valley Library. Contact Laurie for more information, 303-810-9626 or [dbsalongspeak@gmail.com](mailto:dbsalongspeak@gmail.com).

### **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)**

Meets in Boulder and Broomfield, weekly peer-only meetings and one friends and family meeting per month. Questions? Contact 720-443-2849 or [boulderdbsa@gmail.com](mailto:boulderdbsa@gmail.com).

### **The Sutherland Bipolar Center**

The Sutherland Seminar Series offers 8 drop-in seminars on bipolar disorder, open to anyone in the community. Mondays, 6:30-7:30 pm in Boulder. Audio downloads available! More info at [info@rdsfoundation.org](mailto:info@rdsfoundation.org) or 303-492-5680.

### **Suicide Survivors Support**

Sponsored by Naropa University  
3400 Table Mesa, Suite 102 in Boulder.  
Mondays 5:30-7:00 pm. Discuss important topics in a safe, confidential environment with other people who have experienced suicide loss. 303-546-3589 or [counseling@naropa.edu](mailto:counseling@naropa.edu).

### **Suicide Survivors**

Free support group for family and friends of someone who has died by suicide. Longmont Senior Center, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30-7:30 pm. Call Betsy Owens at 970-978-6802.

### **Adult OCD Support Group**

Support for people with OCD, their families and friends. 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays, 7:00-9:00 pm at Alfalfa's Market Community Room, 1651 Broadway, Boulder, Contact Brent, 303-422-9704.

### **Teen OCD Support Group**

For teens with OCD ages 12-19. First Wednesday of the month, 6:00-8:00 pm. Call 303-815-8076 or email [lilyangelina44@gmail.com](mailto:lilyangelina44@gmail.com).

### **Spiritual Support Group for Mental Health and Wellness**

For persons in recovery and family members, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, 7:00-8:30 pm. First Congregational Church in Boulder. Call 720-839-4139 or email [anne.weiher@gmail.com](mailto:anne.weiher@gmail.com).

### **Shift Groups**

Friday nights at Flatirons Community Church. Learn more at [www.flatironschurch.com/shift](http://www.flatironschurch.com/shift)

### **Soft Voices**

Drop-In Art Center for adults with mental illness, Tuesday–Friday afternoons, 1:00-3:00 pm in basement of 501 Fifth Ave, Longmont. Crafts on Wed afternoons; art on Fridays and music once a month usually on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month.



## Join the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Your dues include membership in NAMI National, NAMI Colorado and NAMI Boulder County. You will receive NAMI newsletters and invitations to members-only events. You can join online at [www.namibouldercounty.org](http://www.namibouldercounty.org) or mail in the form below with a check.

- \$40 per year individual or \$60 per year family membership
- \$5 per year for people with a limited income
- I want to support NAMI Boulder County with a tax-deductible gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_

• *Does your employer have a matching gifts program?*

Your membership dues and gifts will help provide support, education and advocacy for Boulder County Individuals and families who are coping with serious mental illness.

I am interested in:

- Learning about volunteer opportunities, either ongoing or one-time only
- Arranging for speaker or presentations on mental illness for my club, church, work, or other group
- Helping with advocacy efforts by writing letters/making phone calls to my elected representatives

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Alternate phone** \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form with your check to: NAMI Boulder County, 3470 Broadway St., Boulder, CO 80304