

# **NAMI Hawaii Advocacy/Policy Priorities 2024 – 2025**

Hawaii, like many states, faces a variety of mental health challenges that require legislative attention. NAMI Hawaii has selected the following four key priorities for the upcoming legislative session that will be beneficial for improving mental health services and support in our state: **1) Crisis Response Services; 2) Quality, Affordable, and Culturally Relevant Care, 3) Criminal Justice Mental Health Reform and 4) Workforce Development that includes Peer Support Specialists.**

## **CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES**

NAMI Hawaii is committed to advancing efforts to “Reimagine Crisis Response” in our state. We are calling for a standard of care in every community that provides a continuum of crisis services that ends the revolving door of ER visits, arrests, incarceration and homelessness.

Issues under this policy focus may include the funding, maintenance, expansion, and improvement of:

### ***~Someone to Call***

- Crisis call centers (988) and other hotlines

### ***~Someone to Respond***

- Mobile crisis response units
- Crisis intervention teams (CIT)

### ***~Some Place to Go***

- Crisis stabilization centers
- Inpatient psychiatric care
- Long-term supportive housing

### ***~Someone to Support***

- Comprehensive case management services
- Assisted community and outpatient treatment (ACT, AOT)
- Clubhouses

## **QUALITY CULTURALLY RELEVANT CARE**

NAMI Hawaii fights for policies to ensure people get the best possible care. About one in five Americans experience a mental health condition, but only half receive treatment. People with mental health conditions should have access to health care coverage that is affordable and includes parity for mental health so they can get appropriate care as early as possible.

Issues under this policy focus may include supporting measures that address funding, safety, and emergent issues regarding:

- Culturally competent education and trauma informed care
- Care for service members, veterans, and their families

- Care for houseless individuals and families
- Care for LGBTQ+ individuals
- Telehealth
- Medicaid and Medicare reform
- Access to effective medications
- Access to evidence-based therapies and integrated wholistic care

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH REFORM**

NAMI Hawaii continues to be concerned about the care and treatment of justice involved individuals with mental health conditions. Appropriate care will result in diversion from arrest and incarceration, reduced recidivism, and successful reintegration into community.

Issues under this policy focus may include supporting measures that address funding, access to and quality of care regarding:

- Alternatives to arrest
- Alternatives to incarceration
- Quality accessible mental health services within jail and prison
- Reentry programming to support successful reintegration

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

Investing in the training and retention of mental health professionals is essential. This includes supporting programs that provide education and training in mental health care and ensuring competitive compensation and career development opportunities. Peer Specialists are individuals who use their lived experiences with mental health conditions to provide support to others facing similar challenges. Their role is increasingly recognized as valuable in the mental health system. Act 88 established a Peer Support Workgroup and requires a report to be prepared with recommendations by June 2025. NAMI has an important seat on this workgroup.

Issues under this policy focus may include the funding, maintenance, expansion, and improvement of:

- Recruitment, training, certification, and licensure mental health professionals, including peer specialists
- Adequate internship and practicum placement opportunities
- Livable wages
- Quality assurance and supervision
- Peer specialist roles in entire continuum of care
- Shortages in auxiliary mental health workers (medical translators, navigators, peer/family advocates, etc.)

## **NAMI Hawaii's 2025 legislative advocacy efforts will not prioritize issues related to:**

- Housing
- Food security
- Medical transportation
- Minimum wage
- Cannabis legislation beyond the priorities listed above
- Vaping and e-cigarettes
- School policies (e.g. school absence policies, curriculum)
- Sex work legislation
- Human trafficking
- Death penalty
- Gun violence/safety
- Conditions that are beyond NAMI's scope of mental illness and co-occurring disorders (e.g. autism, dementia, fetal alcohol syndrome)

## **Regarding NAMI Hawaii's Advocacy Omissions** (Taken from The Public Policy Platform of NAMI):

### **Regarding Legislative Focus**

NAMI places the highest priority on:

- (1.8.1) Medical treatment, services, education, re-training of professionals and providers in the recovery model of care,
- (1.8.2) Rehabilitation and recovery for persons with serious mental illness, and
- (1.8.3) Research aimed toward the ultimate prevention and cure of these conditions.

### **Regarding Population Focus**

NAMI strategically focuses on serious mental illnesses and underserved populations, e.g. people who are difficult to engage in treatment, homeless, involved in the criminal justice system and veterans or military personnel. At the same time, NAMI strongly embraces the principle of recovery and believes that all mental health and related services and supports should be provided with the goal of helping individuals achieve recovery and resiliency in their lives. As with other medical decisions, people living with mental illness should be integrally involved in decisions about their own treatment and supports.

### **Regarding Allyship with other Communities**

Individuals with mental illness share many similar problems with persons with other disorders and disabilities. To achieve our own goals, NAMI supports, to the fullest extent possible, solidarity with other disability and patient advocacy communities to effect positive changes in societal attitudes, government, education, and public and private institutional responsiveness. NAMI will advocate for the rights of people with mental illness, even when our views conflict with the views of other disability groups.

**Regarding Anti-discrimination:**

NAMI supports public policies and laws that work to eliminate mental health inequities perpetuated by bigotry and discrimination against LGBTQI populations. NAMI supports public policies and laws that work to eliminate mental health inequities perpetuated by racism and racial discrimination.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

As a NAMI State Organization (NSO), NAMI Hawaii should respond to the needs of our local communities while maintaining our solidarity to our alliance's overall vision. NSOs have the leeway to focus in and out of policy priorities based on, but not limited to, capacity, current legislation, state specific issues/populations, and the overall "health" of our mental healthcare system.

The omissions in our 2024–2025 policy priorities are not intended to "rank" or devalue certain aspects of mental healthcare reform in Hawaii. These priorities are also limited to our legislative focus and should not be used as reasons to divert funding/resources from NAMI Hawaii's education and support programs, community engagement efforts, or awareness events (e.g. NAMIWalks), nor should it be used to diminish the worth of social justice issues/social determinants of health not covered by our policy platform.

NAMI Hawaii may also submit testimony in support or in opposition to bills outside of our priority areas after meaningful engagement (i.e. meetings, think tanks) with another advocacy organization.