

Start advocating in your community!

Let your voice be heard at the legislative level. Learn how to reach out to your legislators and get involved with creating legislative change. Read our [Advocacy vs. Advocate](#) page to see where your interest falls!

<h3>Understanding Washington's Legislative System</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State Legislator Contact Info</li><li>• Legislative Flowchart</li><li>• Additional Resources</li></ul>	<h3>NAMI Washington Legislative Agenda</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2018 Goals/ Talking Points</li><li>• Legislative Updates</li><li>• Election Year FAQs for NAMI Staff</li></ul>	<h3>Reaching Out</h3> <p>Your Legislator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Testimony Guide</li><li>• NAMI Day</li></ul> <p>NAMI Smarts for Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using Social Media</li><li>• Fact Sheets</li><li>• Advocacy for HS Students</li></ul>
---	--	---

#### What Advocacy Does

Advocacy is a way to support, influence and create change in your community or state by reaching out to local officials, raising awareness and educating people on areas that need to be improved within the mental health system. The resources in our toolkit include basic information on Washington States legislative system, tips for reaching out to officials and NAMI's legislative goals.

Before continuing, understand that this toolkit is for people wanting to advocate for mental health related issues, **not** for people wanting to become an advocate. Read this [Being an Advocate vs. Advocacy Work](#) pdf for an explanation of the differences.

#### Understanding Washington's Legislative Process

NAMI Seattle crosses over with several legislative districts in Seattle. First, locate your district and legislator.

- [State Legislator Contact Information](#)
- <http://app.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder/>

#### Get acquainted with your state legislative process.

- [Legislative Flowchart](#)

Keep in mind:

- The **regular session** begins on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in January each year.

- Session last for 105 days in odd numbered years (eg. 2007) and 60 days in even numbered years (eg. 2008).
- **Special sessions** (extraordinary sessions) can be called by the governor to address specific issues such as budget.
- Lasts no longer than 30 days.
- A bill must go through the committee process in both chambers (house and senate) in order for it to become a law.
- Bills that have fiscal importance may be referred to a fiscal committee (Finance, Appropriations, or Transportation in the House. Ways and Means, or Transportation, in the Senate) for review before passing to the Rules Committee.

#### **Additional Resources Provided by your [Washington State Legislator](#)**

- Legislative Process in WA: <http://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Overview.aspx>
- How a bill becomes a law in WA: <http://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Bill2Law.aspx>
- How to read a bill: <http://leg.wa.gov/BackToSchool/Documents/howtoread.pdf>

#### **NAMI Washington 2018 Legislative Agenda**

Below are links to NAMI Washington's 2018 Legislative Priorities and Issues Talking Points. These documents outline NAMI Washington's stance on specific mental health related issues. These can be useful to refer to when contacting your legislators:

#### **NAMI Washington's 2018 Legislative Priorities**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uA-TehOKW\\_TbTc4efo3eOpz1SmYgSIws/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uA-TehOKW_TbTc4efo3eOpz1SmYgSIws/view?usp=sharing)

#### **Talking Points**

- [Fully Funding a Comprehensive Behavioral Health System in Washington](#)
- [Increasing Access to Assisted Outpatient Behavioral Health Treatment](#)
- [Legal Financial Obligations](#)
- [Prioritizing Prevention and Early Intervention](#)

#### **2018 Behavioral Health Policy Legislation Results**

- [2018 Legislative Updates](#)

#### **FAQs for NAMI staff, Board members and volunteers**

What to do — and what not to do — as a volunteer, Board Member or staff member during an election year.

#### **What if I volunteer as a NAMI Support Group Facilitator or NAMI Education Teacher/Trainer?**

- As a NAMI facilitator, teacher or trainer, you represent our organization and serve as a role model when you volunteer. As a result, you should not wear pins, stickers or visibly identify with specific candidates or political parties and should not publicly express your opinions on candidates or political parties while serving in your volunteer role. When you are done fulfilling your NAMI role, such as after class, you are free to express your political views

#### **What if a participant brings up a candidate or political party during a support group or education program?**

- If a participant is experiencing symptoms as a result of a candidate or political party, focus on the feelings and not the candidate or political party.
- If a participant brings up a political party or candidate absent any symptoms, treat the comments like any other time when a participant is off-topic—bring the individual and the group back on topic.

### **Can I express my personal political views?**

- NAMI staff, Board members and volunteers are free to participate in partisan activities in their personal time. To engage in partisan activities during the work day, staff members must take nonpaid personal time.
- You may not make partisan comments in NAMI organization publications and you may not publicly express your opinions on candidates while serving as a representative of NAMI at an event.
- If you are a NAMI staff member or leader who is primarily using your social media account(s) in your professional NAMI role, you should avoid tweeting or posting your personal political views, candidate comments or political commentary or information that could be viewed as partisan.
- You may share your political views in your personal social media accounts. But, we recommend that you note that the views you express are your own if you are known as a NAMI representative or staff
- NAMI staff, Board members and volunteers should not wear pins, stickers or visibly identify with specific candidates or political parties while representing NAMI at an event, such as a NAMI booth or candidate forum.
- Do not use your NAMI's resources to help or oppose a particular candidate—such as organization vehicles, paper, copy machine, etc.

### **Can a staff member be listed as a supporter of a candidate with the organization's title included?**

- It is okay to have your name listed as supporting a candidate. If your NAMI organization is listed, the listing should state "for identification purposes only." If you are a NAMI organization leader and you choose to make comments about candidates, you must indicate that they represent your personal opinion and not that of your NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate

### **What if a candidate lists a staff member and organization as a supporter without permission?**

- If a candidate lists a NAMI staff, Board member or volunteer with their NAMI title on campaign material without the disclaimer ("for identification purposes only") the organization is not at fault. The organization should ask the campaign to remove their name from the list. Make sure to save your email or written request.

### **Reaching Out**

Developing a relationship with your legislators is an essential part of making a difference in the legislative process. Contacting your legislators can come in many forms: writing a letter, scheduling a personal visit, testifying before a committee and attending town meetings. Be sure to know the ins and outs of the issue you decide to take on in order to effectively convey your message. This will not only increase your credibility, but also your confidence.

Thank you to [NAMI Connecticut](#), [NAMI DuPage](#), and [NAMI Maryland](#) for providing additional documents.

### **Contacting Legislators**

- [Tips for Contacting Elected Officials](#) NAMI DuPage County
- [How to Address Your Legislators](#)

### **How to Turn Your Story into a Testimony**

- [Medication Access Story Example](#) NAMI Connecticut
- [Parity Story Example](#) NAMI Connecticut

- [Thank You Letter to Legislator](#) NAMI Connecticut
- [Tough Q/A with Legislators](#) NAMI Maryland

### **Using Media to Expand your Audience**

Get in touch with your local media outlets, write an opinion article, raise awareness to the public, build a group of supporters with similar interests

- Contact local media eg. Seattle Times, The Stranger, Seattle Weekly, Westside Weekly
- Social media outlets eg. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram

### **[NAMI Lobby Day](#)**

### **[NAMI Smarts for Advocacy](#)**

#### **Advocacy for High School Students**

- Use social media (Twitter, Facebook, email legislators about new bills/their personal story). NAMI has a feature called advocacy alert that people can sign up for to get updates about what to tweet their legislators. Contact Lauren Simmonds at NAMI WA to receive Mental Health Action Alerts [Lsimonds@namiwa.org](mailto:Lsimonds@namiwa.org)
- Attend local city council meetings. You can use this as a way to create local community outreach projects/events that could raise awareness about mental health and encourage people in the community to advocate.
- Write a letter to your local legislator.
- Start a club to raise mental health awareness in your school.
- Contact NAMI about ending the silence presentations.

### **[Mental Health Fact Sheets/Statistics for Washington](#)**