



NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies is an in-service mental health presentation for current and future school personnel. It familiarizes school personnel with the early warning signs of mental illness in children and adolescents. School teachers, counselors, nurses, administrators and support staff learn how to support students experiencing mental health challenges and how to effectively partner with families to connect these students to services early.

### **Importance of Prevention and Early Intervention**

- One in four adults—approximately 61.5 million Americans—experiences mental illness in a given year.
- Approximately 20 percent of youth ages 13-18 experience severe mental disorders in a given year.
- Almost one-half of youth ages 8-15 with mental illness received no mental health services in the previous year.
- Although 50 percent of individuals began experiencing symptoms by age 14, the average delay between onset of symptoms and receiving treatment is 8-10 years.
- Approximately 50% of high school students with a mental illness drop out, the highest of all disabilities
- Studies show that stigma is the greatest barrier to individuals receiving treatment and achieving recovery.
- The majority of individuals who receive treatment early are able to recover, effectively manage their mental illness and lead fulfilling, productive lives.

### **How does NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies Work?**

- One to two-hour presentation which can be integrated into a school in-service training
- Delivered by a trained four-person team whose perspectives include:
  - Education professional.
  - Parent of a child who lives with mental illness.
  - Individual living with mental illness who had symptoms as a child/adolescent.
- Includes presenter stories, educational slides and discussion.
- Reduces the stigma of mental illness through:
  - Education—provides accurate information about the early onset of mental illness to promote understanding and dispel myths.
  - Personal contact—puts a human face to childhood and adolescent mental illness and provides hope that recovery is possible.

### **What Makes NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies Unique?**

- Offered to schools at no cost.
- Provides teachers and staff the opportunity to learn about mental illness directly from family members and individuals living with mental illness.
- Provides school personnel with tools to effectively communicate with families

## **How does NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies benefit school personnel?**

- School personnel learn strategies to promote student success including:
  - Identifying needs and linking youth with services early.
  - Communicating effectively with families.
  - Classroom accommodations to create a supportive learning environment for students living with a mental illness.

## **How does NAMI Parents & Teachers as Allies benefit students and their families?**

- Helping connect students exhibiting warning signs of mental illness to services early increases the likelihood that they will achieve recovery and may help them avoid serious mental illness.
- Providing effective classroom accommodations for students with mental illness may improve academic achievement.
- Strengthening the alliance between families and schools helps prevent unnecessary daily struggles and challenges faced by students with mental illness.

## **Key Messages of Parents & Teachers as Allies**

- Mental illness is a medical illness like any other physical illness.
- Mental illness is not anyone's fault or something to be ashamed of.
- Anger, grief and denial are predictable and common responses when parents have a child or adolescent that is experiencing mental health issues.
- There are specific, observable early warning signs of mental illness. You can help your students and their families by being aware of these signs and making families aware of resources where they can receive support and education.
- There are many ways you can promote student success in your classroom through simple and easy to implement accommodations.
- The earlier children and adolescents receive treatment, the better.
- Recovery is possible. There is hope.

## **What Teachers are Saying About NAMI Parents and Teachers as Allies**

- "This program gave me a new understanding of the importance of my role in early recognition of kids with symptoms of mental illness and the urgency of early intervention on their behalf." – Teacher
- "This presentation should be given to all teachers on a campus-by-campus basis. It would be very helpful to me as a special education teacher in gaining understanding from classroom teachers for my students and their families!" – Special Education Teacher
- "It was very powerful to hear the personal stories of the parents and the young girl with a mental illness diagnosis. This class should be required for all educators." – Teacher

To schedule a presentation, please contact Sara Huron at (513) 351-3500 or [sara.huron@namiswoh.org](mailto:sara.huron@namiswoh.org).