



National Alliance on Mental Illness

# NAMI Pennsylvania

## Wilkes-Barre Office Quarterly Newsletter

The Official Newsletter of NAMI-PA Wilkes-Barre

Newsletter Date April, 2013

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## May is Mental Health Month

### Join NAMI and the Mental Health Community in the Following Events:

- May 2, 11 a.m. Mental Health Awareness Proclamation Ceremony. Luzerne County Courthouse.
- May 4, Noon: Saturday Activity: Scrapbooking anyone?
- May 8, 1 p.m. and May 9 6 p.m. Documentary: This Emotional Life Part One: Friends, Families, and Lovers. NAMI PA office.
- May 11 Original Presentation "A Write Way to Recovery." With Lisa and Glenda. NAMI-PA Wilkes-Barre office.
- May 13 6 p.m. NAMI Board meeting. 7 p.m. Family Support and NAMI Connections. Wilkes-Barre office
- May 15, 1 p.m. and May 16, 6 p.m. Documentary. This Emotional Life, Part Two: *Facing Our Fears*.
- May 17, Friday Noon, Rachel, a music therapist from Arts Youniverse will present. Greenhouse Center: 92 S. Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre.
- May 19 Sunday, Noon Recovery Walk. Meet Guard Parking Lot, Wilkes-Barre. Walk across the Market Street Bridge to Kirby Park for picnic and prizes.
- May 20-24 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. NAMI Wilkes-Barre office Open House.
- May 22, 1 p.m. and May 23 6 p.m. Documentary This Emotional Life: Part Three: *Rethinking Happiness*. Wilkes-Barre Office.

## NIH Shows People with Serious Mental Illnesses Can Lose Weight

*Being overweight or obese contributes to mentally ill people dying at three times the rate of the overall population*

People with serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder can lose and keep off weight through a modified lifestyle intervention program the NIHM (National Institute of Mental Health) reports.

Over 80 percent of people with mental illnesses or overweight or obese, which contributes to them dying at three times the rate of the overall population.

Although antipsychotic medications increase appetite and cause weight gain in these patients, lifestyle modifications such as diet and exercise should work for these patients, yet they are often left out of weight loss studies.

“People with serious mental illnesses are commonly excluded from studies to help them help themselves about their weight, said Gail L. Daumit MD. of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and the study’s lead author. “We’re showing that serious mentally ill patients can make successful, sustained changes with proper interventions.”

This study could usher in new forms of weight loss treatment for people with serious mental illness.”

Until now, obesity among those with serious mental illnesses has not received adequate attention,” said NIMH Director Thomas R. Insel, MD. “People with serious mental illnesses need more attention to their physical health. This study provides convincing evidence these individuals can make substantial lifestyle changes and therefore should suffer fewer medical complications as they age.”

Other factors that preclude people with serious mental illnesses from losing weight include memory impairments or residual psychiatric symptoms that impede learning and adopting new behaviors such as counting calories. Socioeconomics are also a factor as many can’t get to physical activity programs like fitness gyms.

Some patients additionally suffer from social phobia, have poor social interactions, or are simply afraid to work out in a public area.

Daumit’s group attempted to solve these issues by bringing gyms and nutritionists to places most of these patients frequents—psychiatric rehabilitation outreach programs. Under the trial name ACHIEVE the researchers randomized 291 participants in 10 rehab centers around Maryland to receive to usual care, consisting of nutrition and physical activity information, or six months of intensive intervention consisting of exercise classes three times a week along with individual weight loss classes once a week. Both groups were followed for an additional year, during which the weight loss classes of the intervention arm tapered down but the exercise classes remained constant.

The intervention arm included goals such as reducing caloric intake by avoiding sugar-sweetened beverages and junk food; eating five servings of fruits and vegetable daily; choosing smaller portions and healthy snacks; and moderate intensity aerobic exercise.

Participants in the specially tailored weight loss program lost seven more pounds than the controls—and continued to lose weight and did not regain, despite the reduced frequency of classes and counseling sessions. In contrast, the general population tends to experience peak weight loss in the first six months and then rebound and gain part or all of their weight back.

On average, each participant was on three psychotropic medications, with half on lithium or mood stabilizers, all known to cause weight gain. But no matter what they were on, they lost weight.

“We’re showing behavioral interventions work regardless of what they’re taking,” Daumit said.

*The three themes of the Governor’s budget include: Reform in pension system, Privatize liquor stores and fund transportation*

# Pennsylvania Budget Summary by PA Psychiatric Society

All budget items are available at [www.budget.state.pa.us](http://www.budget.state.pa.us)

A few highlights reflected in the DPW budget of interest to psychiatry:

- Funding of an additional \$18.5 million to provide home and community-based services for those on intellectual disability (ID) waiting list.
- An additional \$2.15 million will be allocated for autism services (a 16.5% increase).
- An increase of 1.4% in early intervention funding (or by 2.15 million).
- - An increase of 4.7 million community- based services (CHIPP) funding Community-based health care for 90 individuals being discharged from state hospitals. Ironically, there is an anticipation of a slightly increased bed capacity at all state hospitals but Norristown by July of 2013.
- Community-based health care clinics serving the uninsured and underserved areas will get a \$4 million increase. These community centers could include community mental health centers.
- Expansion of Human Services Block Grants from the 20-county pilots to a state roll-out for any county interested in participating was proposed in this budget. Note, there was no information on the savings in this area.
- Juvenile Justice Reinvestment dollars will be increased by \$10 million based on the closure of the New Castle Youth Development Center.
- The overall mental health line item is increased by roughly \$27 million (or 4%) This is the first raise in quite a while!
- The Office of Mental Assistance Programs Fee-for-Services) budget shows a slight increase for capitation (207.38 million or 5.7%)
- DPW intends on imposing the PH-95 loophole for children with disabilities with family incomes of \$100,000 or more, with an estimated cost savings of 8.3 million. Details are yet to be publicized.
- The Behavioral Health Services Initiative (BHSI) line item was flat funded.
- The Special Pharmaceutical Services line item was increased by \$152,000 (about 7 percent).
- Funding for Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) was increased 4.6% (or 3.8 million)
- The new Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs line item was flat funded.
- On a final note, Governor Corbett stated that he cannot support an expansion of Medicaid at this time as it is “Fiscally irresponsible unless the state is given more flexibility by the federal government. He noted that a letter was sent to the House and Human services secretary Kathleen Sebelius asking for more answers and clarity before a final decision can be made.

## White House Gun Task Force: NAMI Calls on President and “Do What’s Right” for Mental Health Care

Michael Fitzpatrick, executive director of the NAMI met with Vice President Joseph Biden’s task force on gun control, along with other leaders of the mental health community urging action to strengthen and expand mental health care services.

US Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Katherine Sebelius and Attorney General Eric Holder presided over the meeting. “The meeting was not about guns,” Fitzpatrick said. “It was a listening session about fundamental mental health care services. President Obama’s leadership and Congressional action are needed to do what’s right.”

“We need the President to step forward and engage in a national dialogue on mental illness and the mental health care system.” NAMI emphasized four points in the meeting:

- We must invest upstream rather than downstream in the mental health system by developing early identification and intervention strategies and access to treatment and support. Too many families wait years to get the treatment they need. The current system is impossible for many to navigate.
- Change happens through communities. We must provide training to school personnel, law enforcement and others in communities at every level on how to identify and respond to youth and adult experiencing mental health crises.
- Many of our nation’s schools are not addressing the needs of students who struggle with mental health conditions.

We need to implement and coordinate school-based mental health services and supports. With them, many of these children can stay in school and have promising futures.

Besides the stigma that surrounds mental illness other major deterrent to people seeking help when they need it is lack of health insurance coverage. We must fully implement key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, including mental health and addictions parity requirements and efforts to increase a qualified mental health workforce.

The Task Force’s recommendation must include mental health care,” Fitzpatrick said. “No one solution can eliminate violence in America, but saving lives includes saving the lives of individuals and family members who struggle with mental illness every day.”

“Treatment works—if a person can get it.”

“The nation’s common concern must be to prevent tragedies before they happen, no matter who is involved.”

We must have a national dialogue that builds systems of care that provide treatment and support to people who need it, when they need it.”

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## Nomination of Officers:

NAMI-PA Wilkes-Barre will be forming a three member board of elections in order to accept nominations for officers of the affiliate. These positions include: president, vice president, treasurer and secretary. The terms of the offices are for two years. All members of the affiliate in good standing and dues paid up to date are eligible. For more information contact the office at (570)371-3844.

## Guidelines for Low Stress Living

*Learn to make  
time your  
friend, not your  
enemy!*

1. Make time your friend, not your enemy. Develop time management techniques.
2. Learn and practice the skill of relaxing.
3. Engage in activities that give you a chance to do something relaxing or creative without having to show something for it.
4. Don't develop one area of your life to the exclusion of others. Seek rewarding experiences in all facets of living.
5. Find some time every day for privacy. You need to be alone with your thoughts away from work or other pressures.
6. Associate with people who affirm your individuality and respect your wants and needs.
7. Form at least one or two high-quality relationships with people you can trust. Learn to express your true feelings to them.
8. Don't continue in stressful situations with family or friends. Take action to find a resolution in problem areas.
9. Guard your personal freedoms- to choose your friends, to love whom you choose, to structure time as you see fit, and set your life goals.
10. Review your "obligations" from time to time and make sure they are bringing rewards to you. Get rid of the things that only bring satisfaction to someone else.
11. Don't live for or through your children, spouse, or anyone else.
12. Open yourself up to new experiences.
13. Develop and keep sensible eating habits.
14. If you smoke, cut down or stop completely
15. Use liquor sparingly, if at all. Don't let it use you.
16. Get some regular exercise.
17. See the humor in life. Laugh at yourself whenever you get a chance.
18. Practice making positive self statement every day.
19. Treat the people who are important to you as if today is the last day you will ever see them again; be nice to them.
20. Talk to and treat yourself as you would your own best friend.

*Develop and  
keep sensible  
eating habits.*

## First CIT Training Held

The Luzerne/ Wyoming Counties Intervention team graduated its first class Friday March 22. The class consisted of police, probation officers and first responders.

The training is a community-based collaboration between law enforcement, mental health consumers, mental health providers and advocates (NAMI).

The participants are taught about mental health disorders, the local mental health system, and practical methods for de-escalating crisis.

The forty hour course educates first responders (police, EMS, etc) about handling situations involving people with mental illness. Because of the success of the first training, the next class is scheduled for October.

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## **NAMI Testifies Before U.S. Senate on Veterans, Stigma and Suicide Prevention**

NAMI testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on mental health care for veterans.

The hearing covered a broad range of issues. Including the need for hiring preferences for veterans and the need to eliminate stigma for seeking help for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other conditions.

Suicide prevention was a particular concern. Approximately 8,000 veterans die each year from suicide.

Lt. Col. Kenny Allred, US Army (Ret) chair of NAMI's Veterans and Military Council told the committee: "A key ingredient of psychological health is the feeling of self-worth from productive employment. Sadly, veteran unemployment in all age groups across the nation is especially high among our younger veterans.

Starting with active military units and continuing through the US Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) health system, "Accountability must be accepted by all leaders at all levels for any stigma bullying, hazing, suicide or denial of mental health services, Allred testified.

Though many support the need for mental health, there is no formal mechanism for holding leaders accountable in a standardized, systematic manner, and there have been instances of leaders seeming to ridicule those who showed the "weakness" of taking their own lives. Performance evaluations should immediately and specifically include measurements of how leaders are or are not ending stigma and suicide."

NAMI also supports the Independent Budget developed by veteran service organizations and legislative action to require the VA to develop performance measures in its mental health programs.

Allred explained NAMI's work with many VA facilities around the country to provide free NAMI Family-to-Family education and support programs for families of veterans.

He also referenced NAMI's June 2012 report, Parity for Patriots, which includes a call for Purple Heart medals to be awarded for psychological wounds received in combat.

Allred is a former Army Airborne Ranger and Military Intelligence Battalion Commander who served in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Australia, and Central America. He flew reconnaissance aircraft missions against both Cold War and combat targets.