Proposal to

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

By

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

Goal

**Increase Scope of Services to Public**

February 22nd, 2022

**Proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on Behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

**Part 1 – Overview**

**Organization:** National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

**Headquarters:** 4301 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203

**Phone:** 800-950-NAMI

**Website:** <https://nami.org/Home>

**Part 2 – Request Information**

**Request Overview:** NAMI will improve the scope and quality of mental health services offered to the general population by opening 2 additional Chat Support Specialist positions and a new NAMI location in an underserved area. In doing so, we will ensure that the most vulnerable populations have access to the resources they need.

**Project Title:** New Locations and Support Specialists: Expanding NAMI’s Reach

**Full Request for Project Budget:** $500,000

**Project Description:** With this request, we are looking to achieve two primary goals:

1. Increase the number of NAMI Chat Support Specialists by 2
2. Open a new NAMI location in an underserved area

**Fund Interests:** Our two primary goals (as outlined above) align perfectly with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s core values. The RWJF is well known for working to break down barriers to adequate healthcare and health inequity. This project directly addresses these barries by expanding community-based programs focused on improving mental health through education, support, and public awareness. This helps ensure that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can achieve a better quality of life.

**Part 3 – History & Background Information**

NAMI was founded in 1979 following a convention held in Wisconsin, which was comprised of 59 family support groups from 29 states. Since that time, NAMI has steadily developed to become one of the largest US-based advocacy groups. NAMI’s mission statement is as follows: “NAMI provides advocacy, education, support, and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives.”

**Mission:** NAMI seeks to improve the lives of people affected by mental illness and their loved ones. This has been our mission since the organization was founded in 1979. They try to improve the outlook of mental illness in the United States by spreading awareness and acceptance of mental health issues within the entire United States. They also offer a variety of educational programs to the public that cater to people suffering from mental health issues as well as their loved ones, including NAMI Basic, NAMI Family-to-Family, and NAMI Homefront. The information helpline has been effective, but requires expansion.

**Goal:**

With this request, we aim to achieve the following:

1. Open 2 new permanent Chat Support Specialist positions
2. Open a new NAMI location

**Current Programs:**

NAMI has several active programs that aim to address mental illness in the United States from a variety of different angles. Some of these programs include:

* **NAMI Basics**
  + Targeted to anyone who cares for youth who are experiencing mental health symptoms
* **NAMI Family-to-Family**
  + Targeted to families and friends of people with mental health conditions. This program helps provide greater context and understanding for mental health disorders
* **NAMI Homefront**
  + Targeted to loved ones of military service members to help them understand the unique mental health challenges they face
* **NAMI Peer-to-Peer**
  + Encourages growth, healing, and recovery to adults with mental health conditions
* **NAMI Provider**
  + Targeted to mental health professionals

NAMI also seeks to expand services through the [Strategic Plan for 2020-2025](https://www.nami.org/NAMInet/Board-of-Directors/Governance-Documents/NAMIStrategicPlan2020), which identifies the following areas of focus:

1. Ensure that people can get help early

2. Ensure that everyone can get the best possible care

3. Help divert people from justice system involvement

Our long-standing educational programs and strategic planning demonstrate our commitment to achieving our goals.

**How We’re Funded:** At NAMI, we receive most of our funding from individual contributions. However, we also receive significant earnings from foundation and corporate sponsorships, dues, grants, events, and other partnerships. Our future goals are ambitious, and the organization continues to face limitations due to inadequate funding. Proper funding will help us maintain our current programs and enable us to implement our strategic plan for 2020-2025. We are looking to expand our services by opening new locations, hiring additional staffing, and adapting to the latest technology. Continued support from third parties will allow us to achieve our goals more quickly and effectively.

**Part 4 – Context of Problem**

Mental illness is a considerable issue with far-reaching ramifications in the United States. According to the [2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2020-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases) (NSDUH) by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](http://www.samhsa.gov/), 52.9 million Americans suffer from mental health conditions (more than 1 in 5). Data on this topic is wide in scope, with the prevalence of mental health conditions at the state level being found [Kaiser Family Foundation](https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/).

Below are some specific statistics which illustrate the gravity of the issue and the need for our immediate attention.

**Statistics:**

* Lifetime prevalence of anxiety disorders is estimated at 31.6%
* Over 40 million Americans experience major depression
* Even in areas with the best rates of mental health treatment, up to 46% of sufferers do not receive treatment
* The rate of youth with major depression has increased every year since 2011

**Demographics:**

* [According to the CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db419.htm), women are more likely to seek treatment for mental health conditions than men.
* According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness), mental illness among US adults varies significantly by age and ethnicity:
  + Whites are diagnosed more frequently than Hispanic, Black, or Asian populations
  + People of higher socioeconomic status are diagnosed more frequently – potentially indicating that they have greater accessibility to resources
  + Adults age 18-25 have the highest rate of mental illness compared to other age groups

**Cause of Problem:**

[According to the CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm), the there is no single cause for mental illness. There are many factors that can contribute to risk for mental illness, such as:

* Early adverse life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)
* Experiences related to other ongoing (chronic) medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
* Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain
* Use of alcohol or drugs
* Having feelings of loneliness or isolation

Although not all these causes can be avoided, there is still much we can do to help. Social stigma and lack of awareness make it increasingly difficult for people to address their mental health. However, we can reduce these barriers by achieving measurable goals, which is our motivation for this project.

**Who is at Risk:**

Through careful analysis, we can determine where mental health resources are limited. Additionally, there are many observable warning signs that may indicate the presence of a mental health disorder (isolation, negative affect, etc). Since age, ethnicity, and gender are all factors implicated in mental illness, we can also look at specific demographics where mental health issues are more likely to be a problem (minority groups, low-income populations, etc.). These metrics will help ensure that our new location is built in a highly vulnerable and underserved area so that we are contributing where we are needed most.

**Addressing the Issue**

An increase in knowledge can help reduce the stigma and foster greater acceptance for mental health conditions. A slow but steady increase in knowledge over time has directly resulted in greater acceptance and recognition of mental health issues. This is one of the primary ways we hope to mitigate this issue. Another potential intervention is increasing accessibility for mental health resources so that individuals can get the help that they need. Awareness of mental health disorders and access to resources can be improved by continuing to destigmatize the problem. This can be accomplished by expanding programs (like the education classes hosted by NAMI, as listed above) whose mission is to educate about mental health. Helping organizations such as NAMI establish more locations/more of an online presence will also help distribute resources to a wider population.

**Part 5 – Goals & Objectives Table**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Measurable Objectives** | **Implementation Activities** | **Timeline** | **Methods of Evaluating Process** |
| Obj 1.1:  Open 2 new permanent NAMI Chat Support Specialist positions (currently 10 specialists) | * 1. A. Develop improved training program   2. B. Negotiate with HR to increase base pay   3. C. Promote position on external job sites | 2/15/2022 to 4/30/2022  2/15/2022 to  4/30/2022  4/30/2022 to 8/30/2022 | * 1. A. At the end of August 2022, we will know if we achieved our goal by examining the total number of Chat Support Specialist employed by NAMI (should be 12). |
| Obj 1.2:  Open a new location in an underserved area | * 1. A. Determine which areas are underserved & select a location. This will involve significant scoping and analysis to determine the ideal location   2. B. Create detailed plan for opening the new location (timeline, blueprints, materials, labor, etc.)   1.2 C. Implement plan: build location, hire staff, advertise to community | 2/15/2022 to 3/15/2022  3/15/2022 to 6/1/2022  6/1/2022 to 8/30/2022 | * 1. We will know if we accomplish this goal by determining whether we opened a new location by the end of August 2022. We will also keep tabs on each step of the process to ensure that we are staying on track. |

**Part 6 – Budget**

We are seeking $500,000 to finance our goals as outlined in this proposal. In 2020, NAMI had a total revenue of $28.3 million ($25 million from contributions), and a total expenses of 20 million. For specific information about our most recently published annual report, see [NAMI 2020 Annual Report](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/PDFs/Financials/NAMI-2020AnnualReport-FINAL.pdf).

However, to meet all our goals for the 2022 fiscal year, we require an additional $500,000.

Below is the breakdown of how these funds will be spent:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measurable Objectives** | **Allocation of funds** | **Projected costs** |
| **Obj 1.1:**  Open 2 new permanent NAMI Chat Support Specialist positions (currently 10 specialists) | * Job posting/scouting * Training * Salary | $5000  $6000  $100,000 ($50,000 x 2) |
| **Obj 1.2:**  Open a new location in an underserved area | * Scoping new location * Planning/design * Materials * Labor | $10,000  $30,000  $209,000  $140,000 |
|  |  | **Total:** $500,000 |

**Part 7 – Proposal**

NAMI addresses mental health issues across the entire Unites States through its many educational programs, awareness events, and general guidance. Since NAMI’s founding in 1979, they have been consistently committed to increasing awareness, providing education, and guiding people to the resources they need. This has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in tolerance for and awareness of mental illness in recent years. However, there is still a long way to go.

**Measurable Goals:**

We currently have two measurable goals that we will achieve, which will directly improve the outlook of mental illness in the US:

1. First, we will increase staffing of support specialists on our online chat portals by opening 2 additional positions. Support specialists guide users to the appropriate resources, ensuring that they can find the help that they need. Due to insufficient staffing, users do not always receive a response in a timely manner. This translates to people potentially missing out on life-changing resources. By increasing our staffing, we will directly improve the speed and efficiency in which users are helped.
2. Second, we will facilitate the opening of a new NAMI location in an underserved area. The prevalence of mental health disorders is higher in states with inadequate resources, as [indicated by data](https://www.kff.org/statedata/mental-health-and-substance-use-state-fact-sheets/) compiled by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Opening additional NAMI locations in these regions means more guidance, education, and awareness about mental health where it is needed the most. We will evaluate our progress towards these goals quite simply: our first steps towards these goals begin in mid-February, and a detailed plan of action will ensure that our goals are fully realized by the end of August. In the end, we are confident that NAMI will have 2 more support specialists and a new location in an underserved area.

**Part 8 – References**

* *Substance abuse and mental health services administration*. SAMHSA. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2022, from <https://www.samhsa.gov/>
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* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *NIMH " home*. National Institute of Mental Health. Retrieved February 7, 2022, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>
* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved February 7, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/>
* Home: Nami: National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2022, from <https://nami.org/Home>