

Commission for Behavioral Health Advocacy Spotlight

August 28, 2025

Who we are

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) California is a grassroots organization of families and individuals whose lives have been affected by serious mental illness. NAMI California includes **46 local affiliates** across the state and **60,000 active advocates** dedicated to advocating for the needs of individuals living with serious mental illness and their families to ensure collaboration, effective education and access to care.

We advocate for lives of quality and respect, without discrimination or stigma, for all our constituents through programs and services and community engagement.

Our priorities include:



Family involvement in treatment



Criminal justice issues



Access to treatment



Housing



Crisis services



Services and support for all ages

Our vision

Serve as the leading voice for a full continuum of mental health care for individuals to increase access, quality and improved services for individuals living with serious mental illness.

Expand the family voice in leading conversations on mental health issues through advocacy, legislation and policy development in California.

Break down barriers to mental health and behavioral health stigma and discrimination.

Our action – *Advocacy-Driven*

Annual Advocacy Day

Each year, NAMI California welcomes advocates, family members and youth from across California to participate in our Advocacy Day. This event allows the opportunity for attendees to:

- Learn from NAMI leadership and state partners about policies and legislation impacting our state's behavioral health system
- Engage with hundreds of NAMI advocates at our rally event in Sacramento
- Meet with legislators to share their stories and share needs of local communities
- Last year, we welcomed more than 270 advocates



WHERE THE
CHANGE
HAPPENS

Our action – *Advocacy-Driven*

Advocacy Trainings: NAMI Smarts

NAMI Smarts is a six-module program that equips individuals with tools to communicate their stories to decision-makers effectively. It provides practical advocacy training, enabling those affected by mental illness, along with friends and family, to convert their passion and personal experiences into impactful grassroots advocacy.

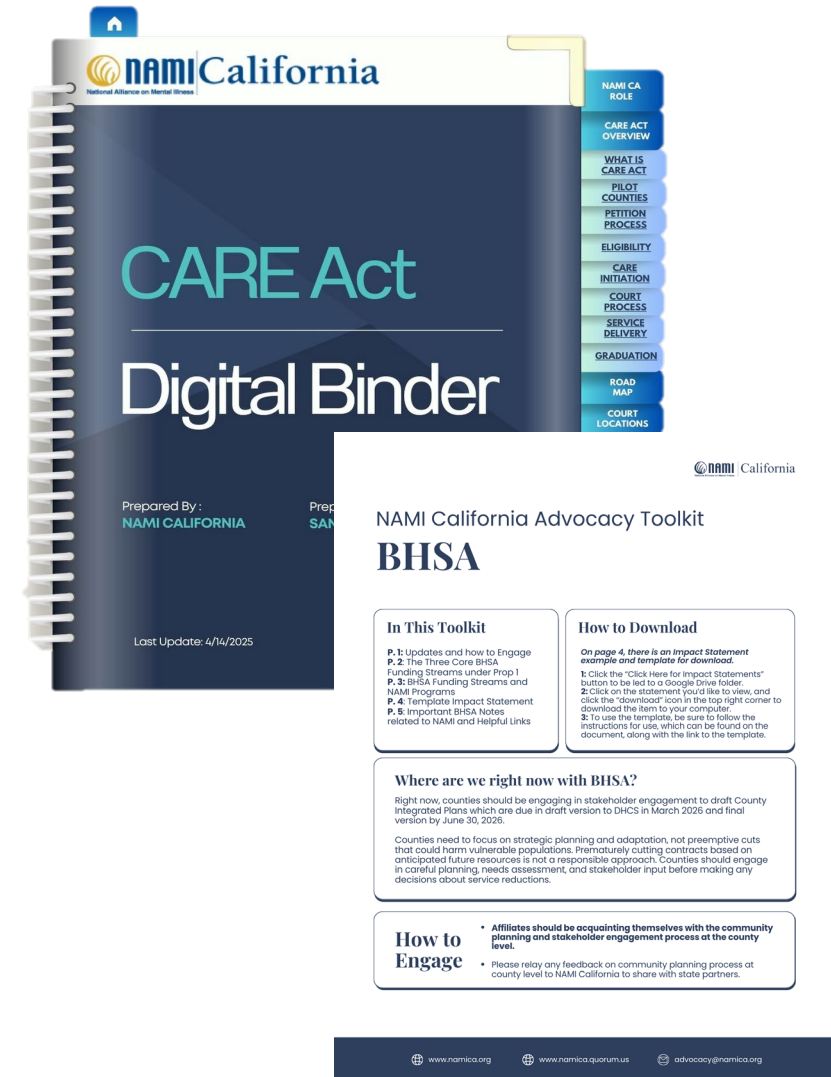
- 30 NAMI Smarts presenter trainings offered across 5 regions throughout the state
- Six family listening sessions in diverse communities
- Six Sharing Your Story NAMI Smarts leader trainings

Our action – *Advocacy-Driven*

Advocacy Education: Proposition 1 and CARE Court

NAMI California supported Proposition 1 and CARE Court, and affiliates and advocates on the legislation.

- Last year (and now), NAMI California actively engaged with state and local partners on CARE Act implementation to ensure family involvement is at the core of the process through resource development, support calls, information sharing, panels, webinars and listening sessions.
- NAMI California is continuing the process with Prop 1 (BHSA) and equipping affiliates with the tools they need to advocate at the local level.



Our action – *Programs Supporting Families*

Community feedback: Mental Health Families Stakeholder Survey

We administered our annual statewide survey to understand the unique experiences of family members and caregivers navigating the public mental health system to drive our work and priorities for the following year.

Priorities of our families included:

- Access to care and services
- Mental health parity
- Family involvement in treatment

Our action – *Programs Supporting Families*

Programs

NAMI California programs are designed to increase awareness, educate communities, and destigmatize mental health.

Signature courses offered in English and Spanish included **Family to-Family, NAMI Basics, Peer to-Peer, NAMI Connections, and Family Support Groups**

NAMI
Psychoeducation
Classes served
70,000+ peers &
family members

NAMI Support Groups
served 65,000+ peers
and family members,
schools, and more

Mental Health
Presentations taught
268,000+ peers,
family members,
advocates and more

Our action – *Programs Supporting Families*

Family-to-Family psychoeducation programming

- 39 Family-to-Family program leaders trained
- NAMI CA trained 21 Provider leaders and hosted two provider classes per region.

Our action – *Community and Collaboration*

Regional Townhalls

NAMI California held **8 townhalls reaching 260+ affiliates and community members** across Los Angeles, Northern, Central, Southern, Superior, and Bay Area.

Our staff participated or facilitated panels, including panels on CARE Act engagement and education, supporting our leadership engagement at the local level. Speakers also included affiliate leaders, individuals with lived experience, behavioral health professionals, and local county behavioral health representatives.



Our action – *Community and Collaboration*

Workforce and Community Engagement

In January 2023 through June 2024, NAMI California engaged in the **CalHOPE** program with the nine NAMI affiliates and one additional partner agency forming 21 “pods” consisting of trained support specialists who assisted with providing resources and referrals such as NAMI CA signature programs, support groups, warmlines and online CalHope services.

NAMI California also provides training for those who aspire to become **Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists**. This field is growing rapidly and our Affiliates assist placing those who complete the training into jobs within local city, county, or non-profit organizations. **Over the past year, we had over 300 participants complete the training.**

Our Impact



Our Future



Our Vision

Define the future we want, build it together, and fix what's broken



Our Action

Ensure quality, equitable mental health care for all through continued advocacy



Our Future

Keep NAMI California strong, loud and growing today and always