



## **NAMI NJ Support to Veterans**

NAMI NJ volunteers maintain a very close working relationship with VHA New Jersey and New Jersey Department of Veterans and Military Affairs (DMAVA) on mental illness issues for Veterans, active military, and families. NAMI NJ is an active member of the New Jersey Veterans Affairs Health Care System (VANJ) Veterans Advisory Council (VAC), which provides Veterans' patient related input and recommendations to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Mental Health Services.

## **NAMI New Jersey Veterans Committee**

*The Mission of the NAMI New Jersey Veterans Committee is to educate and advocate for military and Veterans and/or their families with serious mental illness working in cooperation and coordination with New Jersey State and Federal Veterans Affairs leadership.*

**Veterans Advisory Council (VAC)** NAMI New Jersey Veterans Representative participates in monthly meetings at either the Lyons or East Orange Campus. The VAC is made up of veterans and staff with a Veteran as chair. The council meets monthly at Lyons (main location) and East Orange via videoconference. This enables patients at both hospitals to participate in the meetings and committees.

**Family to Family Education Program (FFEP)** On the national level NAMI has a memorandum of understanding with Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to provide the Family to Family Education Program for families and Veterans in every state by 2010. Thirty states, including New Jersey, have completed the first class. NAMI National only provides the course material master copy to the VA. The VA provides copying of all course material for each course. The NAMI State organizations have to initiate working with the local VA, coordinate class formation, fund and provide the teacher training/teachers, and teach the classes.

NAMI New Jersey's Family to Family Program Coordinator and NAMI Veterans Representative worked with the Local Recovery Coordinators (LRC) and staff of Veteran Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) throughout 2008 to educate them about the content of FFEP to help ensure referrals to the classes by clinicians, with the goal of starting the first FFEP in 2008. It took almost a year to get enough interested families to form a class. NAMI NJ taught the initial class for Veterans and families during the summer of 2009. We are now planning our second class for early Spring 2009 – starts 25 February. The short term goals are to have two classes in 2010; another class at Lyons and a second one at East Orange, and to get two graduates trained to teach additional classes. As more teachers are trained the plan is to expand the locations to the CBOCs/Vet Centers; first Brick then Newark.

**VA Mental Health Recovery Transformation.** A key collaboration effort is supporting the implementation of the VANJ Mental Health Recovery Transformation Strategic Plan. This effort will result in Veterans and staff working together as teams toward the goal of veterans' recovery. NAMI NJ representative participates in weekly teleconferences and monthly conferences at VANJ Lyons Campus. Education of the veterans and staff in this new paradigm and veteran community integration are two of the current challenges NAMI is deeply involved in helping to implement. NAMI conducts research and provides information and reports on education opportunities that may be of benefit to

**New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) Support.** NAMI is a member of the DMAVA Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Task Force and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Team to ensure that the New Jersey Army/Air National Guard members, families and returning veterans are supported before, during, and after deployments. There three distinct events that are participated in following deployments: 30, 60, and 90 day events.

The first official event (30 day event) is to provide Soldiers and families with information on benefits. New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) also included employers, service providers, and educational entities in an “Expo.” The second event (at the 60 day point) focuses on the warriors’ and families’ mental health through discussion groups and the final reintegration event (90 day event) is for a comprehensive health screening of each warrior. NAMI participates in the 30 and 60 day events.

**County Veterans Service Bureaus** NAMI has a good working relationship with New Jersey and County Veterans’ Service Officers to ensure veterans are able to receive benefits they are entitled to in a timely manner and are working together to ensure veterans encountering the judicial system or public mental health system are identified and ultimately supported by the VA system.

**Coming Home Project** NAMI New Jersey participates on Monmouth University’s School of Social Work Advisory Committee for its Coming Home Project designed to educate new and current social workers on veterans’ issues and support needs.

**NAMI NJ Links to Resources** NAMI NJ Provides current events, resources, and links to other veterans support resources through our [NAMI New Jersey Web](#) page.

### **NAMI New Jersey Participation in NAMI National Veterans Council**

*The Mission of the NAMI Veterans Council (NVC) is to advocate for Military and Veterans with serious mental illness and their families in comprehensive and coordinated systems of care in both inpatient and community settings.*

[NAMI Veterans Council](#) includes members from each of the 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) of The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and each of the NAMI state organizations; all working together as advocates for an improved VA continuum of care for Veterans with severe and persistent mental illnesses.

The NAMI Veterans Council is composed of persons with mental illnesses, relatives and/or friends of persons with mental illnesses and Veterans and VA employees who have an involvement and interest in issues affecting Veterans. NAMI’s Web page has a [Veterans’ Resource Center](#) that provides resources and links to other resources for Veterans and families.