



**MESSAGE FROM NAMI NJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ABOUT COVID-19 (Corona Virus)**

March 12, 2020

Dear NAMI Family,

Like all of you, the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, has been on our minds and in our conversations for the past weeks. We have been struggling in what is the best course of action for our members, our loved ones and ourselves. As the situation develops hourly, we are monitoring what is happening in the local communities, the state and across the country.

The State of New Jersey has declared a state of emergency, but for the purposes of releasing funds and stopping price gouging. At this moment, there has not been any restrictions on movements or gatherings.

NAMI NJ is looking at the COVID-19 situation seriously. The challenge for us, as NAMI NJ, is that we provide desperately needed support and education services to families when hope is hard to find. We do not want to blanket cancel all of our activities, at a time when many of our members are feeling unsure about the current state of affairs and can use our support. We are also aware that many of our members fall into the high risk categories.

**To that end, NAMI NJ is providing the following guidance to our affiliates and members:**

- NAMI NJ **will be continuing with small meetings, education classes, and support groups on a case by case basis.** At this time, we are asking the members in those groups to determine if they would like to continue or postpone the activity. Family to Family classes that elect to postpone their classes will be supported by NAMI NJ when they decide to start up again.
- NAMI NJ will not hold, and we are requesting our affiliates to **not hold any meetings of more than 25 people.**
- NAMI NJ will be canceling the general membership Strategic Planning meeting, planned for 3/22/2020 in Burlington, NJ. It will be rescheduled.

**Additional steps NAMI NJ is doing:**

- In the case that it becomes imperative to cancel all in-person NAMI activities in NJ, we are currently investigating online and teleconference options for Family Support Groups and Connection groups. Please stay tuned for updates in this area.
- NAMI NJ is making preparations to keep office operations moving, in the unlikely case that we need to close the main office and full time staff need to work remotely.

**What can affiliates do:**

- Have the conversation with your education classes and support groups. Empower your members to decide what is best for the affiliate and themselves.
- If you are canceling your support groups- please contact NAMI NJ as soon as possible. We will coordinate electronic supports for your affiliate that you can share with your membership.

- Do not hold any large scale (25+ people) meetings.
- If you are aware of any member in your affiliate, who has attended meetings, who was exposed to COVID-19, please let us know.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

As of 3/11/2020 the **CDC shares the following information:**

Current risk assessment:

- For the majority of people, the immediate risk of being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low. There is not widespread circulation in most communities in the United States.
- People in places where ongoing community spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been reported are at elevated risk of exposure, with increase in risk dependent on the location.
- Healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Close contacts of persons with COVID-19 also are at elevated risk of exposure.
- Travelers returning from affected [international locations](#) where community spread is occurring also are at elevated risk of exposure, with increase in risk dependent on location.

We have currently posted a PowerPoint on the current information on COVID-19 on our website.

**The symptoms of the novel coronavirus are:**

Mild to severe respiratory illness, Fever, Cough, Shortness of Breath

**What to do if you have symptoms:**

If you develop symptoms, **call your healthcare provider** and tell them about your symptoms. Do not go into the doctor's office or hospital unless your healthcare provider asks you to.

If your symptoms are mild and you are not sick enough to be hospitalized, you are able to isolate at home. Please follow the CDC guidance to reduce your risk of spreading it to others.

If your symptoms are severe or life-threatening, call 911

**STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK - with symptoms for COVID 19 or the flu!**

Get to know your neighbors, especially those who might need extra help like seniors or people living alone.

**How you can protect yourself and others from the spread of coronavirus or any other respiratory disease:**

- Wash your hands, often and for at least 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday!)
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get your flu vaccine if you have not already.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any cough or sneeze with a tissue then throw it in the trash or use the inside of your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- Make sure you have the kinds of foods, drinks, medication and pet supplies you would want if you needed to stay home and limit your contact with other people for a couple of weeks.

**Ways to Avoid Headline Anxiety and to Cope with the News:**

from <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/5-ways-to-cope-with-the-news> and <https://www.calmmoment.com/wellbeing/how-to-cope-when-the-news-makes-you-feel-stressed-and-depressed/>

1. Avoid triggering topics in the news.
2. Limit your news consumption.
3. Be cognizant of your social media use.
4. Practice good stress management.
5. Understand that it is normal to be somewhat concerned by this.

I thank you for your patience and understanding, as we try to balance the severity of the situation with the needs of our families. This is an ever-evolving model and we will be providing updates as they happen. Please check our website on a regular basis for update.

Be safe and stay healthy.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meredith Masin Blount'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Meredith' being the most prominent.

Meredith Masin Blount  
Executive Director