Dear *FIRST_NAME*,

Through your input, NAMI Texas has developed 15 different issue areas that may be public policy priorities in the 2019 legislative session.

We could now use your help (and the help of other NAMI members in the state) in identifying which of those issue areas we will express as priorities in the 2019 legislative session and going into 2020. Let's face it: 15 different issue areas as priorities would be a lot of ground for us to cover and could potentially overwhelm the audience of policymakers that we're trying to influence. While NAMI Texas has historically worked on a broad range of policy issues related to mental health and will continue to as one of the leading mental health advocacy voices in the state, we can best leverage our credibility and advocacy network strength by highlighting a narrower set of priorities for state leadership to focus on at our request.

To that end, we have developed a survey that will allow NAMI members and interested stakeholders to indicate the issue areas that they view as most and least important. There is also an open-ended question option that allows for additional input. We would deeply appreciate your completion of the survey and sharing it with those in your network who are interested in mental health from a family/peer perspective. Click [HERE](#) to access the survey link.

The survey shouldn't take much more than 5-15 minutes to complete. We intend to leave it open at least through Wednesday, August 15th. You can expect that we’ll have a full discussion and presentation on our 2019-20 Public Policy Platform at the 2018 NAMI Texas Annual Conference in Austin on October 26th and 27th. You can get more information on the conference [HERE](#).

Make your voice heard on the policy priorities of NAMI Texas!

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**Recent Advocacy Highlights**

Youth mental health has been a forefront issue at the Texas Legislature. NAMI Texas testified in front of the Senate Select Committee on Violence in Schools & School Security on July 18 regarding youth mental health interventions and again on July 24 regarding Extreme Risk Protective Orders. We spoke to the committee about the First Episode Psychosis treatment program Coordinated Specialty Care, which has proven to be effective in treating early psychosis, but only has 12 treatment teams across the entire state. We also educated the committee about NAMI's Ending the Silence education program for students. We are aiming to expand mental health education and reduce stigma for not only teachers, but also students and parents.

In many gun violence incidents – both suicides and interpersonal shootings - people who knew the shooter observed signs of dangerous behavior, but federal and Texas state laws provide no clear legal process to restrict access to firearms. When a person who is a risk of harm to themselves or others has access to a highly lethal device like a firearm, the risk of irreversible harm is greatly increased. With well over [half of gun deaths being suicides](#) and [suicide rates increasing by 25% nationwide since 1999](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/suicide-prevention.html), Extreme Risk Protective Orders, or "Red Flag Laws", allow certain parties, including family members, to petition a court directly for an order temporarily restricting a person's access to firearms.

For more NAMI Texas perspective on this issue, visit the [Texas House video website](https://www.texas.gov/texashouse/videostream) for a video of our 6/25/2018 invited testimony and listen to our recent appearance on [Texas Public Radio](https://www.texaspublicradio.org/).  

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**Welcome NAMI Texas’ New Policy Coordinator**

NAMI Texas recently hired a Policy Coordinator who will work as a key member of our advocacy team with direct supervision and mentorship by our Public Policy Director, Greg Hansch. Funding for this position is made possible by the Policy Fellowship program of the [Hogg Foundation for Mental Health](https://www.hoggfoundation.org/).
We are extremely pleased to announce that our new Policy Coordinator is Alissa Sughrue. Alissa recently graduated from the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work with a Master of Science in Social Work in the Administrative/Policy Practice concentration. Alissa has always been passionate about helping youth and families in need, having served as an education liaison and youth care worker with the LifeWorks Emergency Shelter for over four years and as a case management intern for Southwest Keys’ Youth Mentoring and Family Keys programs. This spring, Alissa served as a Policy Intern with a focus on health and social services for State Representative Donna Howard. With NAMI Texas, Alissa is focusing on mental health policy issues specifically impacting children and adolescents, trauma prevention, and any external factors contributing to mental illness.

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