NAMI Texas hopes that you and your loved ones are doing well during this difficult time. Remember to reach out to your mental health providers and support networks if needed, as many are transitioning to telecommunication services and are still here for you.

NAMI support and education groups are still available, but now online. Check with your local affiliate, or visit [https://namitexas.org/online-support-groups/](https://namitexas.org/online-support-groups/) to attend statewide online support groups.

Texas Health and Human Services has launched a 24/7 statewide mental health support line to help Texans experiencing anxiety, stress or emotional challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This new resource offers COVID-19-related mental health support for all Texans. **People can call the Statewide COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week toll-free at 833-986-1919.**

**COVID-19 Advocacy: Share your mental health story**

The spread of coronavirus is affecting every person in this country, but people affected by mental health conditions face unique challenges during this time.

Have you had trouble getting or staying on your mental health treatment plan? Have you had challenges getting needed medication, accessing therapy or other supports during this emergency?

**Tell us your story.** Help power NAMI’s advocacy by sharing how local, state or federal government has helped you during this time — or tell us about challenges you’ve experienced that have hurt your ability to get mental health care.

**Share your story of how COVID-19 impacts your mental health care**
Mental Health in the Federal CARES Act

People affected by mental health conditions face unique challenges during the COVID-19 crisis. Fortunately, the government has passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which will give immediate help to individuals and nonprofits struggling because of this emergency.

Below are highlights that are particularly important for people with mental health conditions and the NAMI alliance.

**Mental Health Services**

- $425 million for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), including:
  - $250 million to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). Note: not all states have CCBHCs, and they may not be available statewide in states that have this program.
  - $50 million for suicide prevention programs.
  - $100 million for emergency-response spending that can target support where it is most needed, such as outreach to those experiencing homelessness.
  - $15 million for tribal communities.

**Housing**

- $17.4 billion to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including funding for the following programs to make up for reduced tenant payments:
  - $1 billion for Project-Based Rental Assistance.
  - $15 million for Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities.
  - $685 million for Public Housing Operating Fund (also for use to help contain spread of coronavirus).
  - $1.25 billion for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance to preserve Section 8 voucher rental assistance for seniors, the disabled and low-income working families who experience loss of income.
  - $4 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants to address coronavirus among people experiencing homelessness as well as to help individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness due to coronavirus.
  - $5 billion for Community Development Block Grant program, which can be used flexibly to address COVID-19, including rental assistance and services for people who are homeless.
  - Temporarily stopping evictions for HUD multi-family properties and on all eviction filings.

**Veterans**

- $19.6 billion to the Department of Veterans Affairs, including:
  - Expanding mental health services delivered via telehealth, including for case managers and homeless veterans in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program.
  - $14.4 billion to support increased VA services, including programs to assist homeless and other vulnerable veterans.
Requiring TRICARE and VA to cover COVID-19 testing without cost-sharing (*included in Families First Coronavirus Response Act passed earlier this month).

Criminal Justice

- $1 billion to the Department of Justice, including:
  - $100 million to the Bureau of Prisons for costs related to coronavirus, including medical care and tests for inmates and personnel.
  - $850 million paid through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program to assist local law enforcement agencies in responding to coronavirus, including medical needs and other supplies for inmates in prisons, jails and detention centers.

Medicaid

- Temporary 6.2% increase in the federal matching rate for Medicaid programs (*included in Families First Coronavirus Response Act passed earlier this month).
- Requires states to cover COVID-19 testing in Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) without cost-sharing, including for uninsured individuals.
- Allows states to extend Medicaid coverage for testing to the uninsured (*included in Families First Coronavirus Response Act passed earlier this month).

Medicare

- Requires Medicare and Medicare Advantage to cover COVID-19 testing without cost-sharing (*included in Families First Coronavirus Response Act passed earlier this month).
- Medicare Part D plans will be required to provide up to a 90-day supply of prescription medication upon request during the COVID-19 emergency period.
- Expands Medicare telehealth by allowing people to receive telehealth services in their home, from a broader range of providers and allows for new patients.
- Permits Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) to provide telehealth to Medicare beneficiaries, but does not include community behavioral health organizations.

Confidentiality

- Modifies the 42 CFR Part 2 regulation that governs substance use records to allow for sharing health information among providers with initial written patient consent.

Provisions for Nonprofit Organizations and Employees

- The CARES Act includes resources for small businesses, including nonprofits like NAMI affiliates and state organizations, as well as individuals struggling with financial security. Key highlights included below:

Nonprofit “Paycheck Protection” Loan Program

- Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations with fewer than 500 employees can take part in this program (emergency SBA 7(a) loans) through the Small Business Administration (SBA). The loans (up to $10 million) allow nonprofits to pay their employees, provide benefits and cover facility and certain business costs through June 30, 2020.
- If the nonprofit keeps all employees on the payroll through December 31, 2020, the loan will
Individual One-time Cash Payments

- People with adjusted gross income up to $75,000 ($150,000 married) are eligible for a $1,200 ($2,400 married) rebate, plus an additional $500 per child. However, the individual must not be a dependent of another taxpayer and must have a work-eligible social security number. The rebate phases out at higher incomes.
- Cash payments are available to people who receive SSDI and SSI. Any person on SSDI, as well as anyone on SSI who filed a 2018 tax return, will be sent the payment automatically. If a person on SSI did not file a 2018 tax return, they can file a 2019 tax return now to be eligible. If a family has a Special Needs Trust for a family member on SSI and they filed a 1040 in 2018, they should also be eligible. More guidance on this process should be available as early as next week.
- Payments will not affect asset or income limits used for programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid.

Unemployment Benefits

- Creates the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, which will be available for people who are not usually eligible for unemployment benefits (self-employed, independent contractors, people with limited work history, etc.).
- Funding will be given to states to reimburse nonprofits and certain other organizations for half of their unemployment benefit costs through December 31, 2020.
- Provides an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits through December 31, 2020 to help those who remain unemployed after state benefits run out.

Charitable Giving Incentives

- Permits cash contributions to charities in 2020 of up to $300 without having to itemize deductions (to be claimed on tax forms next year).
- Lifts the existing cap on annual contributions for people who itemize deductions from 60% of adjusted gross income to 100%.

If you have anything you would like to share with NAMI Texas advocates in these emails, please send the information to policy.fellow@namitexas.org.

- Alissa Sughrue and the NAMI Texas Public Policy Team

Message from the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

We are trying to collect as many concerns/issues that people on disabilities may be facing related to COVID-19. For example, people that receive in-home services are worried about nurses and medical personnel not coming to their home for fear of transmitting the virus.

If you hear of any issues, or you identify any issues/concerns please email gocpd@gov.texas.gov or call (512) 463-5739. We are trying to collect as many of these issues as possible to elevate.

Disability Rights Texas Offers Help Accessing Disability-related Services
Disability Rights Texas is concerned about how the COVID-19 is impacting access to services. If you know of individuals who are attempting to access services and cannot get them, we want to hear from them. Please have the individual contact DRTx intake either online at intake.drtx.org or through our toll free number 1-800-315-3876.

For more information on Disability Rights Texas and their resources for COVID-19, visit https://www.disabilityrightstx.org/en/category/covid19/.

Maternal Mental Health Survey - Please Fill out By March 31st

The goal of this survey is to identify opportunities for improving access to maternal mental health screenings, referrals, treatment, and support services in Texas. If you are a professional that works with pregnant or postpartum women, if you work with kids and their families, or if you or a family member have experience with maternal mental health challenges, we hope you will complete this survey.

Please access the survey HERE. The survey will take about 15 minutes and will close on Tuesday, March 31st. This survey was developed by Texans Care for Children in partnership with St. David’s Foundation to gather information from stakeholders across Texas about maternal mental health. If you have questions please contact Adriana Kohler at akohler@txchildren.org.

The survey is intended for:

- Professionals working with moms and/or kids, such as: medical providers, OB/GYNs, pediatricians, mental health professionals, community health workers, doulas, professionals at community organization serving moms or kids.
- Individuals who have experience with a maternal mental health challenge.

Members Sought for the Texas School Health Advisory Committee

If you’re interested in issues surrounding school health, you may want to apply to be a member of the Texas School Health Advisory Committee. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission executive commissioner and Texas Department of State Health Services commissioner will appoint members to the committee to serve a term expiring July 31, 2023; July 31, 2024 or July 31, 2025. Applications are due by 11:59 p.m., April 10.

HHSC will consider applicants’ qualifications, background and interest in serving on the committee and will try to choose committee members who represent the diversity of all Texans. For this reason, HHSC considers applicants’ ethnicity, gender and geographic location.

- Please review the linked application letter to find out who the committee is seeking as representatives and if you qualify.
- After reviewing the application letter, and verifying you meet the qualifications for at least one category, click on the application linked here to apply to be on the committee.

It is preferred that you submit your application electronically, but you may submit the application by email, mail or fax. Here are the addresses:

Email: HHS_Appointments@hhsc.state.tx.us
Attn: TSHAC

Mail:
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Mail Code 0223
Austin, TX 78751
Attn: Susanna Sparkman

Fax: 512-206-3984
Attn: TSHAC

A Texas School Health Advisory Committee member must regularly participate in committee meetings and may also have to participate in subcommittee meetings, projects and presentations. Committee meetings are held at least twice a year in Austin or at the call of the presiding officer. To the extent permitted by the current state budget, a member of the Texas School Health Advisory Committee who is in the Parent category may be repaid for their travel expenses to and from meetings if money is available and in accordance with the HHSC Travel Policy. Other committee members aren’t paid to attend or travel to and from committee meetings.

For more information about the committee, visit the committee website or contact Anita Wheeler.
For more information about the application process, contact Susanna Sparkman.

NAMI Texas is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of all individuals living with mental illness and their families. Please visit our website at NAMITexas.org for more information. Help support our advocacy efforts by donating to NAMI Texas at https://namitexas.networkforgood.com/.

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