

Where We Stand:

NAMI believes that public policies and practices should promote access to care for people with mental health conditions. NAMI supports the development and expansion of mental health crisis response systems in every community.

Why We Care:

Mental health treatment and suicide prevention are critical health care issues for our country. Yet, when someone experiences a mental health crisis, they are often more likely to interact with a law enforcement officer than a medical professional.

The absence of a truly comprehensive community mental health system means that law enforcement are often the first responders to mental health crises. When law enforcement responds, people in crisis too often end up in jails, in emergency departments, on the street, or worse, they are harmed or killed during the encounter. To change this costly dynamic — which is taking an enormous toll on both human lives and our nation’s resources — we need readily accessible crisis care as an essential component of our mental health service system.

There are three core elements of the National Guidelines for Crisis Care: regional or statewide 24/7 crisis call centers, mobile crisis teams, and crisis receiving and stabilization programs. Crisis call centers should offer real-time access to a person well-trained in responding to mental health,

substance use and suicidal crises every moment of every day. Mobile crisis teams should be led by mental health staff and offer community-based intervention to individuals in need wherever they are, including at home, work, or anywhere else in the community. Crisis receiving and stabilization services should provide recovery-focused, trauma-informed, “living room-like” crisis observation and stabilization. Crisis stabilization programs should provide a no-wrong-door access to mental health and substance use care, including accepting all walk-ins, ambulance, fire and police drop-offs.

NAMI supports the development and expansion of mental health crises response systems in every community.

Simply put, a well-designed crisis response system can be the difference between life and death for people experiencing a psychiatric emergency.

To learn more about NAMI’s work on this issue, visit www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities