



**NAMI Of DuPage County, Illinois**  
*“The County’s Voice on Mental Illness”*

Fall 2007

Dear Professional Educators,

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) DuPage County is a grassroots, family and consumer organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with mental illness and their families.

With the passage of the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Act of 2003 and the adoption of social and emotional learning standards by the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois schools and educators have additional guidelines to follow for the benefit of their students. This legislation recommends a “comprehensive, multi-faceted public awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illness and educate families, the general public, and other key audiences about the benefits of children’s social and emotional development, and how to access services.” NAMI DuPage County seeks to help educate schools regarding mental illnesses and resources available in the community.

*Parents and Teachers as Allies, an awareness training program for professional educators and parents, developed by NAMI Florida, makes clear that families and schools are natural allies in working to ensure that youth with early-onset mental illnesses receive timely and appropriate treatment.*

**Please consider three educational programs available through NAMI DuPage County:**

**NAMI Overview-**

Learn the myths surrounding mental illness. One out of every four families suffer with mental illness and don’t know where to turn. Provide that critical link between school and home while helping families connect to resources available to them. Presented in a 30 to 45 minute presentation. Ideal for Building Support Teams’ weekly meetings.

**Parents and Teachers As Allies**

*Parents and Teachers as Allies* was created as a two hour teacher in-service to help school professionals identify the key warning signs of early-onset mental illnesses in children and adolescents. It focuses on specific, age-related symptoms of mental illness in youngsters. The program is intended to provide an educational tool for advancing mutual understanding and communication between families and school professionals.

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Key topics covered:

- Signs of early-onset mental illnesses in children and adolescents as seen at home and at school
- Educators as trained classroom observers to aid in, but not make, diagnoses
- Understanding family reactions to mental illnesses and guidelines for helping families
- Community resources for parents and teachers
- Recognition that early intervention and treatment leads to better educational outcomes for students

***Breaking the Silence***

Learn more about mental illness in children and adolescents and the impact on their families. A wonderful opportunity for a PTA or PTO sponsored evening to educate parents on mental illness and resources available to them. Approximate length of time is one or two hour format.

***Freshman Health Class Presentations***

Health class students hear first hand accounts of individuals diagnosed with mental illness. This 50 minute presentation includes a 10 minute video presentation of teens diagnosed with ADHD, depression and schizophrenia. A representative from NAMI will present their lived experience living with mental illness. A postcard is mailed home to their families explaining the statistics of mental illness and why early intervention is key.

If we can answer any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Presentations in schools throughout the county are being scheduled now for the coming school year. References are available upon request from those schools where presentations have already been given.

NAMI DuPage County looks forward to the opportunity to work with and support school professionals and families to improve the lives and educational outcomes of children with mental illnesses.

Sincerely,

Brenda Hilligoss  
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School Outreach Coordinator  
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