Build-it-Together: NAMI Wisconsin’s Diversity and Inclusion Initiative

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

NAMI Wisconsin strives to be a stronger, more vibrant organization. Therefore, we have made diversity and inclusion one of our strategic priorities. This priority recognizes that, in order to ensure that we truly are the state’s voice on mental illness, NAMI Wisconsin must meaningfully engage people from all walks of life.

We aspire to be an inclusive organization that supports all Wisconsin communities. This initiative is the beginning of an ongoing effort to strengthen our organizational capacity and expand our reach in Wisconsin.

OUR VISION FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

NAMI Wisconsin envisions a future where all members of our community can talk openly about mental illness and access the support and treatment they need.

These target communities experience a noticeable gap in access to mental health care, services and support. These groups are also greatly underrepresented at NAMI. This is why NAMI Wisconsin has identified these communities as priorities for our outreach and inclusion efforts.

NAMI Wisconsin has identified 5 focus areas that need development in order to make our organization more inclusive: Administration, Policy and Guidelines; Organizational Leadership; Services and Supports; Program Environment; Communication and Language Capacity.

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<th>Target Community</th>
<th>Population in Wisconsin</th>
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<td>Youth (ages 10-24)</td>
<td>1,161,688 (20.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>359,148 (6.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanics or Latinos</td>
<td>336,056 (5.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td>54,526 (1.0%)</td>
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Culture Counts: A person’s beliefs, norms, values and language play a key role in how they perceive and experience mental illness, whether or not they seek help, what type of help they seek, what coping styles and supports they have, what treatments might work and more.

NAMI WISCONSIN STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Provide individualized support to affiliates that will allow them to develop customizable strategies to reach target communities in their area.
2. Generate funds to support diversity initiatives at local and state level.
3. Develop an inclusion committee that is made up of members from our target communities.
4. Connect and develop meaningful partnerships with statewide organizations that serve our target communities.
5. Bring on new board members who possess connections and skillsets for reaching new communities.
THE NEED

The population of Wisconsin is increasing in size and diversity. To effectively serve Wisconsin’s population, our mental health systems need to incorporate behaviors, attitudes and policies that acknowledge, respect, embrace and celebrate a diversity of experiences and perspectives. As a grassroots advocacy organization, our challenge in this multidimensional society is to effectively engage across groups to ensure that we remain the state’s voice on mental illness. The Build it Together priorities recognize that NAMI’s growth and strength depend upon our ability to meaningfully engage all communities in WI, especially those who are underserved.

WHY IS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPORTANT?

Each and every one of us exists within a cultural context. Knowledge and attention to cultural details will help us successfully engage and retain individuals and families from diverse backgrounds. In a diverse NAMI, individuals from all of our communities will have a positive experience, be meaningfully engaged and feel they are part of a safe, trusting environment in which everyone belongs.

Advantages to Inclusion

- The more people we are able to reach, the more NAMI members we can attract
- A larger and more inclusive membership base will increase impact as an advocacy organization
- More visible and effective advocacy will allow us to expand leadership and volunteer base
- The more volunteers we have, the more NAMI programs we will be able to offer
- Increased programming and broader membership/leadership could significantly increase funding sources

TAKE ACTION

NAMI Wisconsin’s newly formed Build it Together (BIT) Diversity and Inclusion team has assessed NAMI Wisconsin’s cultural competence, participated in a 3-day strategic coaching session in Washington DC, formulated a strategic diversity and inclusion plan and is now working to implement the plan statewide. The current initiative will work to make NAMI Wisconsin more inclusive by ensuring that these values become a part of NAMI Wisconsin’s everyday work and are embedded into all aspects of the organization.

Diversity encompasses understanding, respecting, embracing, preserving and celebrating experiences and perspectives that are different from our own.

-NAMI’s Diversity and Inclusion Work Group

We need you to Join Our Voice. What do you think about our strategic goals? Are you willing to contribute your insight and expertise to help us reach them?

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