



National Alliance on Mental Illness

# The Voice

The Newsletter of NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania

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## Grading the States 2009

NAMI National's Report on America's Health Care System for Adults with Serious Mental Illness

**N**AMI National developed its *Grading the States* report to provide a comprehensive, ongoing assessment of the nation's public mental health system for adults. The baseline report was published in 2006, and the latest report was released in March 2009, providing a state-by-state comparison to identify states which have improved and states which have lost ground in their provision of mental health services. It also offers a picture of how the national average has changed in the past three years, and what strengths, innovative trends



and urgent needs can be identified, both by state and nationwide.

NAMI National embarked on this ambitious initiative to break down barriers in government that have led to the abandonment of people with serious mental illness, and to provide direction on how to invest adequate resources in effective mental health services to end the pervasive fragmentation in America's behavioral health system. *Grading the States* is a direct response to the 2003 presidential New Freedom Commission, which described mental health care in the United States as a "system in shambles, in need of fundamental transformation," and a 2006 report from the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine that described the U.S. behavioral care system as "untimely, inefficient, inequitable, and at times unsafe."

In the 2006 *Grading the States*, the states received an average grade of D,

and only five states received Bs. This was the first comprehensive survey of state mental health care systems in more than 15 years. Although the initial reaction to this first report during the information gathering phase was lackluster, when the extremely poor results were released with verified documentation, stakeholders sat up and took notice. For the 2009 report, governors, legislators, state agencies, mental health professionals, consumer and family advocates, the media and taxpayers all responded with a significantly higher level of interest.

*Grading the States* is a useful tool in identifying gaps in Pennsylvania's mental health system and targeting efforts for institutional reforms on both local and state levels," explains NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania's Executive Director Chris Michaels. *Grading the States* has captured the attention of stakeholders across the

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system, which lends great credibility and the voice of expertise to NAMI National and its state and regional affiliates in our advocacy efforts."

The rating system for each state is based on 65 specific, standard criteria. Pennsylvania earned a C in the 2009 report, improving its D grade from 2006. This grade represents progress and places Pennsylvania in the top half of the states. The nation's grade as a whole is still a D. The official breakdown (including Washington DC) includes 0 As, 6 Bs, 18 Cs, 21 Ds and 6 Fs. The report lists four innovations for Pennsylvania, as well as three urgent needs.

### **Innovations**

- National leader in reducing the use of seclusion and restraints
- Creating Consumer and Family Satisfaction Teams (CFSTs) in all counties
- Implementing Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment (IDDT) and other evidence-based practices
- Showing a strong commitment to training and employing peer specialists

### **Urgent Needs**

- Adequate mix of hospital and community services
- Expand mental health courts and jail diversion programs statewide
- Statewide police Crisis Intervention Teams

"It is important to recognize that there is an alignment between the urgent needs identified in *Grading the States* and the initiatives that are already being worked on here in Pennsylvania," explains Michaels. "This report validates our current efforts with our state and local government agencies."

A transformed mental health care system must be focused on wellness and recovery, and centered around consumers and their loved ones. In the 2009 *Grading the States*, NAMI National describes 10 elements that are the pillars of a transformed state public mental health system. (\*See sidebar.) These pillars represent broad values across different settings that will retain their relevance over time.

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## **10 Pillars of a High-Quality State Mental Health System**

1. Providing comprehensive, effective services and supports.
2. Integrating multiple systems to provide coordinated care.
3. Providing adequate funding for public mental health systems and ensuring parity (equal coverage for mental health and substance abuse disorders) in public and private health plans.
4. Focusing on wellness and recovery by addressing the strong link between mental and physical wellness.
5. Creating safe and respectful treatment environments where mental health consumers are treated with dignity, informed of their conditions and play a role in determining their care and recovery.
6. Providing accessible services online and in print for consumers and family members to easily find accurate and current information regarding diagnosis, evaluation, treatments and local resources.
7. Establishing cultural competence to reduce disparities in treatment and outcomes.
8. Building consumer-centered and consumer- and family-driven systems where people with mental illness and their families are highly involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of services.
9. Fielding an adequate and qualified mental health workforce to address current critical shortages of qualified professionals while strengthening care-giving and advocacy roles of consumers and families.
10. Ensuring transparency and public accountability of the mental health system to both the people it serves and to the public at large by effectively measuring, analyzing, reporting and improving on the quality of care it delivers.

# In the Media

In the first half of 2009, local media have turned to NAMI Southwestern Pennsylvania as a trusted resource for accurate, up-to-date information about mental illness and related topics. We take each opportunity very seriously, realizing the impact we can have by reaching hundreds of thousands of people with our message of hope and recovery. Here are highlights of recent media coverage featuring NAMI Southwestern PA.

## WQED-TV "On Q"

April 30, 2009

Topic: Teenage Depression & Suicide

NAMI Southwestern PA formed a panel to discuss this topic live on the air following the premiere of the documentary *A Cry for Help*. The panel included our Executive Director Chris Michaels, our Board Member Dr. Charma Dudley of Family Resources, and Maria Silva of Allegheny Family Connections with her daughter Rachel.

## PCNC-TV "What's On Your Mind"

May 18 and May 24, 2009

Topic: The Stigma of Mental Illness

NAMI Southwestern PA in collaboration with Mental Health America of Westmoreland County  
Funded by the Staunton Farm Foundation



The cast of *The Stigma of Mental Illness*

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"NAMI Southwestern PA strongly agrees with these 10 pillars," Michaels concludes. "To make effective, transformational changes, we need a method of comprehensive evaluation and analysis. *Grading the States* gives regional organizations like NAMI Southwestern PA a stronger voice in advancing our work when we can show stakeholders through this report that our vision is grounded and validated in real-life analysis and measurement."

## WTAE-TV Channel 4 Action News

Jan. 24, 2009

Topic: *Breakfast of Champions* recognizing volunteers of NAMI Southwestern PA



WTAE's Michell Wright with NAMI Southwestern PA staff

## WDUQ-FM Radio

"Mayview"

April 17, 2009

NAMI Southwestern PA's Chris Michaels and Dick Jevon were interviewed for a story about the closing of Mayview State Hospital, particularly the implications on the behavioral health system and services for consumers.

## WDUQ-FM Radio

"Virtual Reality"

April 27, 2009

At NAMI Southwestern PA's annual education conference, reporter Erika Beras interviewed exhibitor Phillip Sauter about his company PMS Microdesigns' virtual reality program that allows individuals to experience what it's like to have delusions similar to those that a person with schizophrenia experiences.

NAMI's *Grading the States* report was released March 11, 2009. It is available online at [www.nami.org/grades09](http://www.nami.org/grades09) and in printed form at [www.nami.org/store](http://www.nami.org/store). NAMI National plans to continue to produce this report every three years as a key component in the continuing public dialogue about how to build an effective public mental health system in America that is evidence-based, recovery-focused and consumer- and family-driven. This report is a national initiative coordinated through state affiliates with support from regional affiliates, including NAMI Southwestern PA. ●