

MARCH NEWSLETTER



A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

We have extraordinary news to share: the San Francisco Department of Public Health has reversed its decision to eliminate NAMI SF's primary contract. Our support groups and educational classes will continue serving the community without interruption.

This victory belongs to you. Everyone who signed the petition, testified, wrote a letter, made a call, or spread the word shifted the outcome. Collective advocacy made the difference.

We also want to be transparent. While preserving our primary contract is a major win, we did lose a secondary contract. That funding gap is real. We are working to integrate those services into our core programs, and we will need to close the shortfall in the months ahead.

That makes this year's NAMIWalks San Francisco on May 16th at Little Marina Green especially important. The Walk is our annual moment to stand together for mental health and we hope you will join us. Stroll the Crissy Field waterfront with hundreds of fellow San Franciscans, hear from inspiring speakers and comedians, enjoy kids' activities and a raffle, and celebrate at the finish line with a sweet treat. Community at its best.

Last year, you helped us raise \$130,000. This year, we're aiming for \$200,000 — and every single dollar keeps our services free, multilingual, and available

to every San Franciscan who needs them. That goal is ambitious. It's also completely within reach, because we've seen what this community can do.

We make it fun to walk and easy to raise money. We provide all the tools and materials you need to be a successful advocate and fundraiser — and we'll be hosting both virtual and in-person events for team captains throughout the season, so you'll have support, resources, and community connections every step of the way.

Register today. Start your fundraising page. Recruit your friends, your family, your coworkers. Make a team. Make some noise. Come walk with us!

May 16th at 10:00 AM

**Little Marina Green
Yacht Road and Old Mason Street
Event Route Length: 5K loop**

We hope to see you there!

With gratitude,
Anne Fischer
Executive Director

REGISTER

FROM OUR COMMUNITY



“...it felt like taking my first breath of air after moving through water my entire life.”

Finding and becoming part of the NAMI San Francisco community, first as a peer support group participant, then as a volunteer support group facilitator, and eventually as a full-time staff member, has changed my life in a way that my younger self never could have imagined. My experience with accepting my mental health diagnosis and seeking peer support – moreover, my experience in accepting that I could not fight the battles of my sister, who has major depression, for her – was less-than-straightforward, and I cannot emphasize enough how important NAMI San Francisco has been to my ongoing journey.

Growing up as a first-generation immigrant and firstborn daughter of my family, I followed my more-Filipino-less-American parents' belief that we could not afford to show our inner sadnesses. Exposing our weaknesses meant selling our tickets to find success and belonging in this unfamiliar country, and we needed our sacrifices to mean something. Yet, the more I excelled in my work and academic endeavors, the harder it became to repress my thoughts of hurting myself and ending my life. It wasn't until I reached the point when the "high highs" and "low lows" of my untreated bipolar disorder drove my suicidal ideations to a 10, that I was forced to recognize that I could not sustain this balancing act for much longer. After years in therapy and psychiatry, I felt thankful for my clinical team's support, but I wanted to connect with other people with similar mood disorders and life experiences.

When I attended my first NAMI San Francisco peer support group, it felt like taking my first breath of air after moving through water my entire life. I had no idea that spaces like these existed, where folks felt free to share their difficult personal experiences and unpack the cultural and social stigmas that have kept them from self-acceptance for so long. It felt so uplifting to be in community with other people who understood what it felt like to be carrying the weight of a lifelong mental health condition. When I started facilitating peer and family support groups, I was so moved by how our participants readily offered quiet validation (subtle head nods, gentle self-hugs) and out-loud empathy ("You are not alone in this. I understand what it feels like") for other participants, both new and returning. It is a very special thing to be in a room with people who proudly share how they have been holding on to hope: taking long, never-rushed walks with their senior dogs to remind themselves to "be where their feet are," listening to their loved ones not to find openings to insert their opinions but to understand and partner with them in their recovery.

As someone who used to be nervous to even share when I had a gruesome breakup (7th grade, on the blacktop, via text. We don't talk about it), I empathize with how scary it can feel to dissect our life experiences (let alone in front of a room full of strangers!). But I wanted to name that in my support group facilitator role, through my efforts of destigmatizing mental illness and sharing my story of supporting myself and my sister, I am uplifting our stories and daring to imagine a future that is ours to shape. I get to uplift my community members who are paving their paths to recovery, and in the process, I give and receive support from a team of leaders who want the same things for themselves and each other. I am so thankful for my peer and family facilitator teams, who bring so much unique wisdom and compassion to every meeting we host. If you have previously considered or are currently considering becoming a NAMI San Francisco program leader, we are so excited for you to be part of our mission to support mental health for all.

Keesha Patron
Support Group Manager

RECURRING EVENTS

VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE

First Thursday | 6pm on Zoom *Monthly!*

Third Wednesday | 12 pm on Zoom

Meet staff and learn about
ways to get involved!



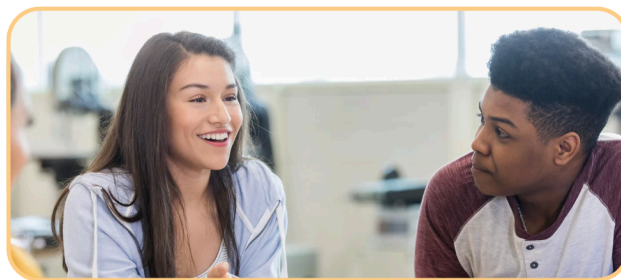
Wednesday, March 18th from 12:00 - 1:00pm

Thursday, April 2nd 6:00 - 7:00pm

Want to learn about ways to get involved and give back? Check out the Open House! Volunteers are at the heart of the NAMI SF mission and there are tons of ways to get involved. The Open House is a great space to meet staff and explore available positions. Monthly on the first Thursday (evening) and third Wednesday (noon).

[REGISTER TO ATTEND](#)

OPPORTUNITIES



HCAI YOUTH PEER TRAINING & PLACEMENT

Are you passionate about supporting others in their mental health recovery journey? NAMI California, in partnership with NAMI San Francisco, is recruiting participants for the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (MPSS) Training. MPSS

is a free training program designed to help people turn their lived experience into meaningful support for others.

This 80-hour live online training, held via Zoom in a cohort-style format, prepares participants to become certified peer support specialists within California's public mental health system. Throughout the course, participants will learn the 17 core competencies identified by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

Beyond the classroom, participants will receive career counseling and job placement support from NAMI San Francisco after completing the training and earning a certificate of completion.

Eligibility requirements include:

- Be 16-25 years old **or** a family member/caregiver of youth
- Have a high school diploma by the age of 18
- Self-identify as having lived experience with mental health or substance use recovery or as a parent/caregiver/family member of someone with a mental health condition
- Be willing to share their lived experience
- Have reliable access to a computer and internet
- Be able to attend all 80 hours of training
- Agree to the Code of Ethics

This is an incredible opportunity for those passionate about supporting recovery, building community, and contributing to California's public mental health system. We encourage all eligible individuals to apply!

If you have questions please contact aisha@namisf.org and/or apply below!

APPLY NOW



Hey There! **NAMI San Francisco**
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Join NAMI SF as a speaker!

**Share your story of living with a
mental health condition**

Paid volunteer opportunity!

**Ages
18-30**

To learn more contact Emma: emma@namisf.org

Hey There! Interested in sharing your story? Sign up to be a volunteer presenter!

The NAMI SF team does a ton of presentations for high school students in San Francisco and volunteer / community member voices are at the heart of this program. Want to get involved?

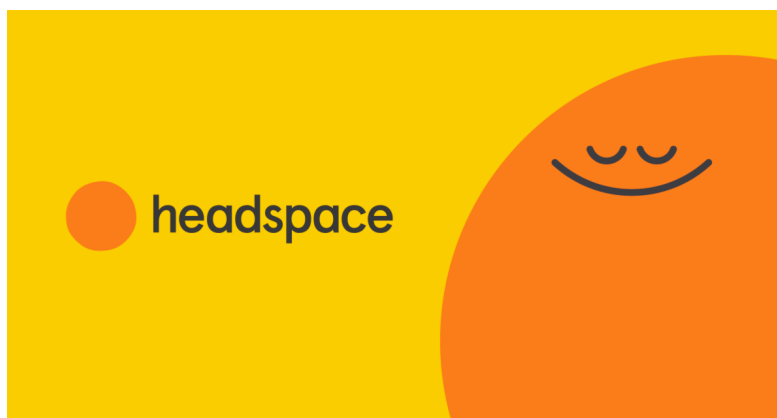
Paid volunteer position, tons of flexibility, and an opportunity to memorialize your story and support student wellness!

*Must identify as someone between ages of 18-30 and living with a mental health condition / mental illness.

*Questions? Email Emma, program director: emma@namisf.org.

[VOLUNTEER](#)

MENTAL HEALTH MEDIA



The HeadSpace mental wellness app offers guided meditations, CBT-based exercises, and mindfulness tools specifically designed to help reduce anxiety and stress. These behavioral tools can help you focus your thoughts and interrupt negative thinking patterns, making it easier to stay centered throughout the day, all from the convenience of your phone or tablet. Give it a try and see for yourself!

[LEARN MORE](#)

BOARD CORNER



CHARLES READER

Why I Show Up for This Work

I remember sitting across from someone who had finally stopped pretending they were fine.

Their shoulders dropped. Their voice softened. And after a long pause, they said, "I didn't think anyone would understand this." Nothing dramatic happened in that moment. No speeches. No solutions. Just the quiet relief of being met with care instead of judgment. I have carried that moment with me for years because it captures what mental health support truly looks like when it works.

That moment feels familiar to me.

A family member I love struggled quietly for a long time. From the outside, life looked functional. On the inside, it was much harder. What stayed with me was not just the pain, but how isolating it was. How much effort went into keeping things together. And how powerful it was when understanding finally entered the picture. When support replaced silence.

Mental health has never been abstract in my life. It has lived in conversations that trail off mid-sentence, in people holding it together until they no longer can, and in the weight that unspoken fear can place on a family. I have seen what happens when people feel alone in their struggle. I have also seen how life-giving it can be when someone realizes they are not broken and not alone.

That is why NAMI San Francisco matters so deeply to me.

NAMI creates spaces where people can exhale. Where language replaces confusion and connection replaces isolation. Across San Francisco, people walk into NAMI programs unsure, guarded, or exhausted and leave with something steadier. Not because their problems disappear, but because they are no longer carrying them alone. That work is not flashy, but it is transformative.

Serving on the board is my way of protecting that work. It is about stewardship, responsibility, and care. My role is to help ensure that NAMI remains strong, sustainable, and deeply anchored in its mission so that staff, volunteers, and community members can continue to show up with compassion and integrity.

This work requires clarity, courage, and a willingness to center people even when conditions are complex.

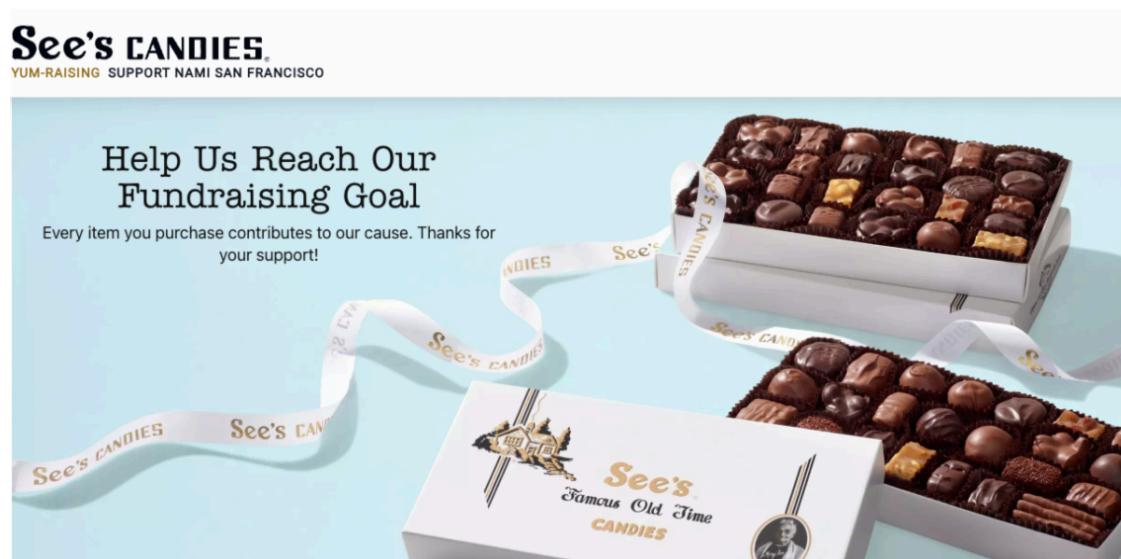
I am especially drawn to NAMI's commitment to dignity and inclusion. Mental health does not exist outside of culture, identity, or lived experience. Stigma does not land the same way for everyone. Access to care is uneven. NAMI does not flatten those realities. It honors lived experience as expertise and creates pathways for support that respect the fullness of who people are.

I believe belonging is a form of healing. I believe listening is a leadership practice. And I believe communities are strongest when we make room for honesty, care, and connection. NAMI San Francisco embodies those values, and it is a privilege to support this organization and the people it serves.

If this resonates with you, know that your presence matters here. Whether you are seeking support, offering it, or learning how to show up with more compassion, you are part of this community. Together, we are proving that mental health belongs to all of us.

Charles Reader
Board Vice President

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE



Sweet Support: Buy See's Candy & Help NAMI SF

Have a sweet tooth? When you buy See's Candies through NAMI SF's fundraising partnership, a portion of every sale comes directly back to support our peer-led mental health programs.

Whether you're treating someone special or indulging yourself, your See's purchase helps us continue providing free support groups, crisis helplines, and educational programs to thousands of San Franciscans in English, Spanish, and Cantonese.

It's an easy way to spread both sweetness and support year-round!

Shop See's Candies & Support NAMI SF



JOIN US on SATURDAY, MAY 16th for our annual NAMIWalk!

Location:

Little Marina Green
Yacht Road and Old Mason Street
San Francisco, CA 94132

Event Route Length: 5K loop

NAMIWalks is more than a walk—it's what happens when individuals, families, and communities show up together and say: mental health matters. Every story shared, every step taken, and every dollar raised moves us closer to Mental Health for All. This event raises critical funding for NAMI San Francisco while serving as our largest mental health awareness event of the year.

In light of the recent budget cuts threatening our programs, your participation is more important than ever. Help us raise the funds needed to keep our support groups, crisis helplines, and educational programs running—and let the city know that mental health matters to San Francisco.

REGISTER FOR THE WALK

Support local business that SUPPORT NAMI SF!

COMMUNITY THRIFT STORE accepts donations on behalf of our charity partners, sell the items in our store, and then disburse the proceeds. When

donating with us you can select which charity should benefit from the sale of your items.

SPORTS BASEMENT is a sporting goods retailer and community center in San Francisco, that sells and rents outdoor gear and equipment. Sports Basement has multiple locations in the San Francisco Bay Area, including the Presidio and Stonestown Galleria. Sign up to become a Basmenteer and enjoy 10% off, then choose NAMI SF as your charity and 10% of profits from that purchase will go to support our mission.

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