

## NAMI ENDING THE SILENCE



NAMI Ending the Silence (ETS) is a prevention and early intervention program that engages youth, school staff and families in a discussion about mental health. Audience members learn to recognize the early warning signs of mental health conditions and learn what to do if they or someone they know is showing these signs. The chance to hear directly from a young adult with a mental health condition dispels myths, instills a message of hope and recovery and encourages individuals to reduce stigma.

Audience members can ask questions of family members and individuals experiencing mental health conditions. By engaging youth, school staff and families in a discussion about mental health conditions, young people dealing with mental health issues realize they're not alone.

The presentation is available for 3 audiences: students, families and school staff.

NAMI Ending the Silence was developed by Brenda & Brian Hilligoss with NAMI DuPage County Illinois. The program has been available since 2007 in DuPage County, NAMI Affiliates in 6 additional states and statewide in California. The program had reached over 60,000 students by mid-2013 when NAMI DuPage generously gifted it to NAMI for national technical support and oversight. Since that time, ETS has been expanded to 28 states.

### **Presentation content**

- Presenter stories, educational slides, videos and discussion
- Resources and tools for teens to help themselves, friends or family members
- Key messages:
  - Mental health conditions are medical illnesses like any other physical illness
  - Mental health conditions are not anyone's fault or something to be ashamed of
  - There are specific, observable early warning signs of mental health conditions
  - You are never alone and there are many resources you can turn to for support and information
  - Recovery is possible and there is hope

### **Goals of the presentation**

- Recognize the warning signs for themselves and their friends and how to get help
- Raise awareness and change perceptions around mental health conditions
- Develop a community of support
- Provide practical, current information about mental health conditions

- Diminish the stigma around mental health conditions so teens feel comfortable talking about how they feel in order to get the help they need

### **Who can participate**

NAMI Ending the Silence for Students is designed for middle and high school-age youth. The program is typically presented in a health, science or psychology class, but may also be provided to youth groups, clubs and after-school programs.

NAMI Ending the Silence for Families is specifically designed for families and caregivers of middle and high-school youth. NAMI Ending the Silence for School Staff are for all staff who work in middle and high schools.

### **Who can present**

The program is given by a two-person team, one of whom is a young adult with a mental health condition between the ages of 18 and 35. Any adult in recovery with a mental health condition or family member of an individual who experienced or is experiencing a mental health condition may apply to be trained as a program leader. All potential program leaders are screened to determine whether the opportunity is a good fit for the individual and for the organization. Potential program leaders attend an intensive online training followed by an in-person practice session to become certified. All program leaders must be members of NAMI.

### **Program data**

Year launched: 2014

States offered: 41

Leaders trained prior to program gifted from NAMI DuPage (2007): 410

Leaders trained since 2014: 800+

Average annual leaders trained: 160

Participants since 2014: 400,000+

Average annual participants: 80,000

### **Research**

Control group study on program effectiveness

- Date of study: 2015-2017
- Researcher: Otto Wahl, Ph.D. Findings: NAMI Ending the Silence is effective in changing high school students' knowledge and attitudes toward mental health conditions and toward help-seeking. The effect is a robust one, occurring across different presenters, across different study schools, and across the diverse populations within those schools
- Published in the Journal of Stigma and Health, 2018

## **What participants are saying about NAMI Ending the Silence**

“Thank you, Renee, for coming to my school and sharing your story. You have changed my life forever. The things you explained about your depression relate to how I feel. When I got home, I immediately talked to my parents and hopefully I will get some help. I have had many thoughts of suicide...” – Andrea R.

“I believe I’ve had depression since 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I have been holding it in for a really long time. After hearing the presentation, I went home and told my mom. I told her I need help with this because it is not something I can fix myself; I have tried and tried. Now, after school today, I have a meeting with a psychiatrist. I am really scared, but I know I am doing the right thing.” – Peter B.

“I’m grateful for your presentation because it helped me get the courage to face a mental illness I think I might have and I feel encouraged to seek help.” – Jessica T.

## **What program leaders are saying about NAMI Ending the Silence**

“Ending the Silence succeeds where so many other forms of outreach fail because of the genuine validity of our experience. Unlike many health teachers who work out of a book and have no personal context to draw on we have the lived expertise acquired through years of struggle. We understand the hurt and anguish like no other and have earned the authority to portray hope as more than a concept. To us hope is a way of life that does not diminish our pain or give power to it.” – Danny Gibbs, ETS Program Leader

“By participating in NAMI Ending the Silence presentations, I get a chance to teach younger people about my illness, and story of recovery. It only took one person to normalize a very misunderstood health issue and be supportive for me to feel confident enough to seek treatment. I am passionate about the education of mental illness, and believe in striking up a conversation so others can also get help and no longer have to suffer.” – Devin Black, ETS Program Leader

“Recently parents from two different families reached out to me after their children had seen NAMI Ending the Silence. Both were thanking me for the work we do along with being grateful to know about us as a resource. They were able to have very meaningful and open conversations with their children/students and happy they are getting this information in the school setting.” – Aileen Caravelli, ETS Program Leader