

Telling Our Stories and Legislative Action Day

On February 13th we had a great program on legislative action and telling our stories led by Matt Shapiro and Sharon Horton from NAMI NYS. During Matt's talk on legislative issues we learned:

- Governor Hochul proposed many items for the Mental Health Budget that are in line with what NAMI is advocating for.
- For 2024 NAMI is advocating for the following priorities:
 - Increase access to equitable mental health supports
 - Reimagine crisis & criminal justice reform so people get treatment not punishment
 - Support Behavioral Health Workforce
 - Recognize unique role of Family caregivers
 - Address children's mental health crisis
- Legislative Action Day will be in person on Wednesday, March 13th

From Sharon's talk on telling our stories we learned:

- The 7 steps for telling our advocacy stories that can be found in the guide on NAMI NYS's website.
- How to focus our story on the part relevant to a particular piece of legislation
- Tips for telling our stories such as:
 - remember your audience is not your therapist
 - you only have 5 minutes so keep it brief by sticking to highlights & key points
 - Keep emotions under control so they move people to action rather than overwhelm
 - use hope and recovery to motivate
 - don't forget to make an "ask"

We also spent a bit of time sharing a couple of personal stories and talking about how to make them more effective.

The following day, NAMI Schenectady received more information on Legislative Action Day.

- It will be held in the Legislative office Building from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm with a general break down as follows:
 - **8:30am:** Registration
 - **9:00-10:00am:** Formal program providing an overview of the agenda, information on key issues, and remarks from the Office of Mental Health Commissioner Ann Sullivan and key legislators
 - **10:00am-4:00pm:** Legislative meetings
- Breakfast and lunch will be provided to all participants
- NAMI NYS is looking for 2-3 participants from each affiliate

I will be attending and **I am looking for one or two members that are not currently on the board** to join me in telling their stories to advocate for Mental Health at the legislature. If you are interested, please contact me at [namischnectady@gmail.com](mailto:namischenectady@gmail.com) by Mar. 1.

Cindy Sood, President, NAMI Schenectady