



Board of Directors Operating Policies

(All policies in this manual have been revised and approved by various committees and the NAMI Vermont Board - 02/24/2017, 06/24/2017, 09/08/2018, 9/11/2021, 12/10/2022, 9/12/2023, 6/25/2024)

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FINANCIAL POLICIES

1. Policy on Use of Funding

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors 2/26/11; Amended, Approved by Board 6/24/17; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21.

1.1 NAMI Vermont solicits and accepts funds from a variety of individual, public and private sources, including corporations, with the exception of pharmaceutical companies. These funds are used to further its mission and programs of education, support and advocacy for individuals with mental illness and their family members.

- All funding is subject to our Board-adopted Conflict of Interest policy and stringent ethical screens consistent with our mission. Like most nonprofits, NAMI Vermont will reject any proposed funding with conditions attached that would violate our mission or compromise our integrity and independence.
- Only grants and contributions to further NAMI Vermont's established mission and program priorities will be solicited and accepted.
- No funds will be accepted for direct legislative advocacy on any issue.
- NAMI Vermont does not accept funds from pharmaceutical companies in the form of donations or exhibit fees. NAMI Vermont accepts fees for registration to attend events such as the conference.
- NAMI Vermont accepts monetary donations or stock that can be sold upon receipt. NAMI Vermont only accepts property of more than nominal value upon review and approval of the Board of Directors.
- Any work products (e.g. educational publications) funded with such support will not include corporate logos or branding. This does not preclude acknowledgement of the support in a manner typical of nonprofit voluntary health associations.

1.2 Accepting funding from any source does NOT constitute endorsement by NAMI Vermont of that individual or entity's public policy views.

1.3 NAMI Vermont's applications for and use of all public and private funding fully meets these standards. We pledge to continue to operate in full compliance with accepted public standards of nonprofit conduct in this respect. We practice full transparency of our finances, and adhere to all laws for nonprofits.



2. Purchasing Policy

*Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors April 30, 2011
Amended, Approved by the Executive Committee 2/2016; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/2021; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023.*

It is essential that uniform purchasing policies be followed by NAMI Vermont staff, officers and directors, and volunteers. In order to maintain financially sound business practices, the following policy will govern purchases, approvals, and reimbursements. Failure to follow this

policy may result in revocation of delegated authority, denial of reimbursement, delay in payment, or other sanctions up to and including personal liability for unauthorized purchases.

2.1 Tax Exempt Status

NAMI Vermont is exempt from paying Vermont sales tax. The purchaser of goods or services should inform the supplier of that fact. A copy of the tax exemption certificate should be provided if so requested by the vendor.

2.2 Personal Purchases

NAMI Vermont will not purchase any supplies or equipment for personal use by staff, officers and directors, and volunteers.

2.3 Local Purchasing

NAMI Vermont will endeavor to support Vermont business in purchasing goods and services.

2.4 Purchase Orders

A purchase order system and form(s) shall be implemented in accordance with the Purchasing Policy.

1. All purchases that are non-recurring expenditures will follow the purchase order system requiring approvals.
2. All purchases that are not itemized in the budget will follow the purchase order system requiring approvals.
3. All purchases in any amount must have accompanying receipts.

2.5 Bidding Requirements

All purchases of goods or services of \$1,500 or more that are non-recurring must have three (3) quotations. The breaking up of a purchase into individual requisitions to avoid the bid process (pyramiding) is not permitted. Responses shall be in writing except that those under \$2,000 may be verbal and noted by a signed and dated hard copy memo in the file. Exceptions to this bidding process could be approved by the Executive Committee, Board, or Finance Committee.

2.6 Approval of Purchases and Check Signing

1. All purchase orders must be approved by either the Executive Director or members of the Board who have check signing authorization.
2. All checks cut in the amount of \$1,000 or more, with the exception of bills deemed routine (e.g. VISA, Insurance, ADP) require the signatures of two check signers.
3. All unbudgeted purchase orders of \$1,000 or more must be approved by the Treasurer or President in addition to the Executive Director.
4. All purchase orders of \$2,500 or more must have the approval of the Executive Committee.
5. Any check payable to a check signer should be signed by a different check signer.

2.7 Reimbursement for Authorized Purchases

1. All purchases made by staff, officers and directors, and volunteers for NAMI Vermont must have prior approval from the Executive Director to guarantee reimbursement, providing that all other requirements of this policy are met. In the case of no Executive Director at the helm, the approval of Treasurer and President shall suffice.

2. An approved purchase order and original receipt is required for reimbursement.



3. NAMI Vermont Investment Policy

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors 11/21/09; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21.

3.1 General Investment Philosophy

NAMI Vermont's financial assets are intended to serve short-, medium-, and long-term needs of NAMI Vermont as defined by the Board. They are intended to preserve the fiscal viability of the organization and enable future development and strengthening of the organization and its objectives. All funds must be expended in accordance with the laws and regulations governing 501(c)3 organizations.

Definition of NAMI Vermont Account Categories

- **Operating accounts:** Checking and/or savings accounts which are used to meet immediate obligations of NAMI Vermont.
- **Operating reserve:** Accounts having 100% liquidity, i.e. cash and cash equivalents, which are immediately transferable to operating accounts in case of cash-flow emergencies caused by unforeseen revenue shortfalls or cost overruns.
- **Long-term reserve:** Accounts that may be invested in assets that are not liquid, assets that have greater risk tolerance and a longer time horizon. This includes:
 - **Vermont Community Foundation (VCF):** This \$50,000 fund is held permanently by VCF, for benefit of NAMI Vermont. Ownership of the principal remains with VCF unless NAMI Vermont experiences a time of hardship. Dividends can be rolled over or deposited to an operating account annually.

3.3 Investment Objectives for the Long-Term Reserve

1. General:

The investment of the funds will comply with the Prudent Investor Act as adopted by Vermont. It allows fiduciaries to use modern portfolio theory to guide investment decisions. A fiduciary's performance is measured on the performance of the whole portfolio, not upon the performance of each individual investment. The act allows the fiduciary to delegate investment decisions to qualified and supervised agents.

2. Risk Tolerance

The primary goal of this Investment Policy (IP) is to generate a long-term return that can meet the current and future spending needs of NAMI Vermont. The primary risk is the failure of the investments to generate the necessary long-term returns to meet this objective.

NAMI Vermont has a moderate to conservative risk tolerance. NAMI Vermont will attempt to manage risk through diversification. NAMI Vermont wishes to meet its long-term return objectives while attempting to limit declines in the market value of the investment assets but understands that based on historical return data its portfolio will experience periods of decline.

3. Time Horizon

NAMI Vermont has a time horizon of greater than 5 years for any funds it presents to its investment advisor for investment.

3.4 **Asset Allocation**

Asset Diversification: As a general policy, the Investment Fund will maintain reasonable diversification between asset classes and investment categories.



4. **NAMI Vermont Management and Use of Investments Policy**

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors January 30, 2010; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023.

4.1 **Fund Purposes & Guidelines for Fund Management:**

A. NAMI Vermont's investment accounts serve two purposes:

1. To ensure the sustainability of NAMI Vermont's current programs & operations; and
2. To grow financial reserves for NAMI Vermont's future sustainability

B. Investment accounts shall be divided into two funds:

1. **Operating Reserve:** The Operating Reserve shall be managed for capital preservation and liquidity as a buffer for the organization's operating budget against catastrophic, cash/flow, and unforeseen revenue shortfalls. A balance shall be maintained such that any transfers from NAMI Vermont's Operating Reserve for these purposes shall not exceed 25% of NAMI Vermont's annual budgeted expenses. (See Note 1)
2. **Long Term Reserve:** Long term reserves are investments that may have a higher risk level in order to provide greater returns, and do not need to be immediately available for withdrawal.
 - a. A portion of earnings and positive changes in the Long Term Reserve (if any) from investments shall be available to provide annual income to NAMI Vermont. The Finance Committee may authorize the transfer of all or some portion of these net earnings to the organization's operating accounts, for the purposes of offsetting deficit. If no transfer is made, earnings shall be retained and reinvested.
 - b. **Restricted Fund:** The restricted portion shall be spent only for purposes prescribed. The Restricted Fund may be used as defined by the funder with documentation. The Finance Committee shall approve use of Restricted Funds to assure they are used for appropriate purposes.

4.2 **Transfers to Operating Accounts and Authorized Agents:**

- #### **A. Transfer from NAMI Vermont's Operating Reserve to its operating accounts:** may be authorized by vote of the NAMI Vermont Executive Committee, for the sole purpose of offsetting a cash-flow situation. Such loans shall be replenished to the investment account, as soon as the anticipated revenue is received. (A cash-flow situation is defined as a temporary deficit between expected expenses and cash-in-hand, with the anticipation of adequate revenue that can repay the loan.)

- B. **Authorized Agents and Advisors:** NAMI Vermont may retain the services of a qualified Fund Advisor to provide professional management of its Long-Term Reserve. NAMI Vermont's Board President, Treasurer, and Executive Director are authorized to represent NAMI Vermont to the Fund Advisor and authorize transfers within the investment account(s), buy or sell orders for securities and other assets, and have ready access to all account information on NAMI Vermont's behalf. NAMI Vermont's Board of Directors also may delegate and authorize other members and employees of NAMI Vermont to communicate with the Fund Advisor on the organization's behalf, with respect to receiving and providing information on behalf of NAMI Vermont about its investment account(s). The Finance Committee will regularly review investment performance with the input of an investment advisor.

4.3 Guidelines for Managing Gifts of Stock and Other Investment Policies

- A. Gifts of stocks, bonds, and other marketable securities and financial instruments other than cash made to NAMI Vermont without restriction by the donor may be sold or otherwise liquidated, within 6 months of receipt, or as soon as possible. However, the Board may choose not to liquidate based on market conditions and asset needs.
- B. Proceeds from the liquidation of such assets will be deposited immediately into NAMI Vermont's Operating Reserve. The Finance Committee will periodically review the investment plans for gifts of stock or other financial gifts.

4.4 Reports

- A. Reports shall be produced as necessary showing the status of the main investment accounts, indicating current value of assets, realized and unrealized gains/losses, and any transfers between accounts. These reports will be reviewed by the Finance Committee and made available to the Board.
- B. The balance sheet shall be reviewed by the Finance Committee and anticipated changes in cash flow may be reported to the Board.

Notes:

1: The figure of 25% is considered adequate to support staff salaries and other costs (rent, utilities, janitorial, etc.) necessary to sustain NAMI Vermont for a three-month period.



5. Funds Transfer Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors, June 2013

1. Funds may be transferred, not to exceed \$10,000 per calendar month, from operating reserves to the operating account with authorization by the Executive Director, or in his or her absence, the Treasurer. Any transfer of \$10,000 or more should be approved by the Board.
2. The Executive Director or Treasurer shall notify the finance committee and President of any transfers within 30 days of making the transfer.
3. Transfer of funds from the Long-Term Reserve requires the prior approval of the Board.



6. Travel Reimbursement Policy

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors April 18, 2009

Amended 1-18-2014 – Board Meeting; Amended 4-25-2016 - Board Meeting; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023.

6.1 Travel Policy

Travel by the Executive Director must be approved by the Board President. All Board, volunteer, or staff travel must be approved by the Executive Director or appointed designee.

Travelers are asked to work with the office staff to book tickets. Travelers will be reimbursed promptly for all approved travel costs upon their return, or in advance when receipts are submitted for approved trips. Air tickets can be booked through a number of online travel sites, or with an airline directly. If you need assistance in booking a ticket, staff may assist you. **Airline tickets should be booked at least 21 days in advance, if possible, to ensure the lowest-cost ticket is booked, including trip cancellation insurance (for any reason – if available).**

In the event of an emergency situation, it is up to the individual to use good judgment for travel arrangements. In extenuating circumstances the traveler will make the best effort to contact the Executive Director or the Board Chair (in the event of Executive Director's travel) to discuss authorization and/or reimbursement.

6.2 Expense Reimbursement

A. Policies

NAMI Vermont pays for all reasonable expenses incurred by members while doing business for NAMI Vermont. This includes attending the Convention or another function as an official representative of NAMI Vermont, done at the request of the President or Executive Director.

Reasonable expenses include hotel at the allowed rate, transportation at the most reasonable fare available, meals, tips and taxes. NAMI Vermont does NOT pay the expenses of a spouse, children, liquor, in-room movies or entertainment, or excess charges above the specified rate for hotels and transportation, and car rentals.

B. Option to donate expenses

Volunteers must submit their receipts for reimbursement within 30 days and may at their discretion donate their payment separately at a later date back to NAMI Vermont.

C. Reimbursement Guidelines

Reimbursement for hotels, mileage, and allowed per diem will be based on the amounts listed in the Federal GSA Guidelines, found on the GSA website, www.gsa.gov.

- a. Meals and incidentals will be reimbursed up to a per diem or agreed-upon meal allowance by NAMI Vermont with receipts.
- b. A travel advance is allowed when approved by the Executive Director.

- c. Hotels are reimbursed up to the daily amount allowed for that location, including taxes; hotel receipts must be submitted. If two NAMI Vermont members share a room, each is reimbursed for half the daily cost of the room, up to the daily maximum allowed for that location. (NAMI Vermont members are encouraged to share rooms when cost of a room exceeds the allowable rate.)
- d. Taxis are reimbursed at actual cost based on a submitted receipt. Use of taxis is allowed for trips between the point of arrival/departure, airport or station, and the hotel, B&B, or home if within 10 miles. Taxis may be used only for travel within a destination for trips associated with the purpose of the travel. Use of buses and other public transportation is encouraged.
- e. Use of a rental car, if it is not the primary means of travel, must be approved in advance by the Board President, or appointed designee. Use of a private vehicle will be reimbursed using the volunteer mileage rate for a charity as specified in the Federal GSA Guidelines. Parking cost will be reimbursed upon the submittal of a receipt. Use of a private vehicle for long trips will be reimbursed up to the equivalent cost of economy airfare, per person in the vehicle, for the same trip including the cost of transportation from the airport to the final destination.
- f. Airline fares will be reimbursed at actual cost, including taxes and fees, at the lowest available economy class rate. Those choosing to fly in a higher class must absorb the cost difference between that class and economy. Rail and bus transportation will be reimbursed at the most economical class of travel. Overnight rail travel may include sleeping accommodation and will be reimbursed only up to the total cost of what would be incurred through air travel as specified in this policy.



7. Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement Policy and Procedure

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors 3-24-2012

Amended 4-25-2016 - Board Meeting; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21.

7.1 Policy

NAMI recognizes that volunteer time and contributions are vital to our success and achievement. At the same time, NAMI must balance this recognition with our responsibility to be fiscally prudent. NAMI has developed this policy to enable volunteers to continue volunteering when they require financial assistance to meet their responsibilities. Volunteers shall only be reimbursed for mileage incurred directly in order to meet their specific volunteer responsibilities. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- NAMI Vermont Volunteer teachers, for planning, promoting and teaching classes
- NAMI Vermont Volunteer Support Group Facilitators, for planning, promoting and facilitating groups
- NAMI Vermont Directors, when traveling on required organizational business
- Mileage incurred while completing volunteer work at the request of the NAMI Vermont Executive Director

Volunteers have a mileage reimbursement rate of the IRS standard reimbursement rate for volunteers of a charity which is not taxable because it is a reimbursement.

NAMI Vermont will not approve mileage that is reimbursed by another source (i.e. DMH, HireAbility)

7.2 Procedure

To ensure accurate record keeping and budget management, expense reimbursement requests must be submitted within 30 days of the travel for which the expense was incurred.

To be reimbursed, a volunteer must submit a detailed record of the date, distance, purpose and reimbursement rate requested for each trip, on a form provided by NAMI Vermont for this purpose.

In the event that a volunteer requires an advance of the mileage reimbursement prior to incurring the expense, the volunteer may request the advance by using the NAMI Vermont Mileage Reimbursement form. All advances must be approved by the Executive Director.



8. Payment of Stipends to Volunteers

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors on 9/11/21.

8.1 Introduction

In some organizations, stipend payments are made to volunteers providing services that fall within the definition of the organization's core mission. Such payments, however, would classify the volunteers as employees, and therefore be subject to IRS reporting, withholding of taxes, worker's compensation costs, FICA and so forth. Work performed for the organization outside of its core mission may be performed by individuals operating as Contractors and is subject to reimbursement as such.

8.2 Policy

NAMI Vermont will not make stipend payments to its volunteers in any form (cash, gift cards, etc.) for services rendered to the organization. Reimbursement may be made to a volunteer for reasonable expenses supported by receipts and approved in advance that are incurred in the performance of the volunteer activity. Such expenses include mileage incurred directly in order to meet their specific volunteer responsibilities. See NAMI Vermont's Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement Policy and Procedure for details.

9. NAMI Vermont Staff Compensation Policy and Procedure

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors on January 19, 2013; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/11/21.

9.1 Policy

The goal of NAMI Vermont's Compensation program is to attract potential employees, meet the needs of all current employees and encourage well-performing employees to stay with our organization. With this in mind, our compensation is built to balance the employees' and NAMI Vermont's needs.

It is NAMI Vermont's desire to pay all employees' salaries and benefits that are competitive with other employers in the marketplace in a way that is motivational, fair, and equitable. Compensation may vary depending upon the performance of the individual and the organization. NAMI Vermont shall endeavor to give all staff an annual cost of living adjustment.

9.2 Procedure

Annual compensation and benefits for all staff shall be determined as part of the budgeting process for the fiscal year. In determining appropriate compensation for the staff, the Board, through the Finance Committee, will employ non-profit industry best practices and existing compensation surveys. The Finance Committee shall document its process for the full Board's review.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to negotiate with the Executive Director to reach agreement on an annual salary and benefits package within that range, which will be presented to the Board for final approval as part of the overall budgeting process. On an annual basis, the Chair shall review the salary and benefits with the Executive Director.

The Finance Committee will determine a salary and benefits range for the office staff. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to set each employee's compensation for the fiscal year within the range set by the committee. Staff benefits are detailed in the Employee Handbook. Staff compensation shall be presented to the Board for final approval as part of the overall budgeting process.

10 Written Procedures Regarding Allowability of Costs

Adopted by NAMI Vermont Board June 25, 2024

Subrecipients of Federal grants must have written procedures for implementing federal payment requirements (200.305) and determining cost allowability (Subpart E). Written procedures for determining cost allowability should include or supplement employee compensation and travel policies if the subrecipient will pay employees or travel expenses through the Federal award.

10.1 Purpose:

1. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.302 Financial Management, NAMI Vermont's administrative requirements must comply as follows:
 - a. Each state must expend and account for the Federal award in accordance with state laws and procedures for expending and accounting for the state's own funds. In addition, the state's and the other non-Federal entity's financial management systems, including records documenting compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award, must be sufficient to permit the preparation of reports required by general and program-specific terms and conditions; and the tracing of funds to a level of expenditures adequate to establish that such funds have been used according to the Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award. See also [§ 200.450](#).
 - a. The financial management system of each non-Federal entity must provide for the following (see also [§§ 200.334](#), [200.335](#), [200.336](#), and [200.337](#)):
 - (1) Identification, in its accounts, of all Federal awards received and expended and the Federal programs under which they were received. Federal program and Federal award identification must include, as applicable, the Assistance Listings title and number, Federal award identification number and year, name of the Federal agency, and name of the pass-through entity, if any.


- (2) Accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial results of each Federal award or program in accordance with the reporting requirements set forth in [§§ 200.328](#) and [200.329](#). If a Federal awarding agency requires reporting on an accrual basis from a recipient that maintains its records on other than an accrual basis, the recipient must not be required to establish an accrual accounting system. This recipient may develop accrual data for its reports on the basis of an analysis of the documentation on hand. Similarly, a pass-through entity must not require a subrecipient to establish an accrual accounting system and must allow the subrecipient to develop accrual data for its reports on the basis of an analysis of the documentation on hand.
- (3) Records that identify adequately the source and application of funds for federally-funded activities. These records must contain information pertaining to Federal awards, authorizations, financial obligations, unobligated balances, assets, expenditures, income and interest and be supported by source documentation.
- (4) Effective control over, and accountability for, all funds, property, and other assets. The non-Federal entity must adequately safeguard all assets and assure that they are used solely for authorized purposes. See [§ 200.303](#).
- (5) Comparison of expenditures with budget amounts for each Federal award.
- (6) Written procedures to implement the requirements of [§ 200.305](#).
- (7) Written procedures for determining the allowability of costs in accordance with [subpart E of this part](#) and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

10.2 Subpart E -- Cost Principles

- The application of these cost principles is based on the fundamental premises that the recipient has in place sound management practices; will follow the terms and conditions of the specific Federal award and will determine, based on its own unique combination of staff, facilities, and experience how to assure proper and efficient administration of the federal funds.
- §200.420 addresses 55 “items of cost” that receive clarification regarding allowability, in general, for using federal funds. The table of allowable costs attached to the end of the written procedures provides guidance on typical costs. Staff should be familiar with and use the Cost Allowable Table to verify the allowability of costs.

10.3 Written procedures for determining and tracking allowable costs

1. NAMI Vermont is a recipient of multiple federal grants and each grant has specific requirements for preparing the budget and determining the eligible activities and costs to the federal grants. NAMI Vermont must review and comply with the program requirements of each grant.
2. Upon award of any federal grant, NAMI Vermont shall prepare an annual budget for the Vermont Department of Mental Health, which incorporates all sources of funds and uses of the funds for the program year, including all Federal grants. This budget shall be included in NAMI Vermont’s annual overall budget.
 - a. Prior to preparing the budget, the Executive Director or designee shall review 2 CFR 200 Subpart E to identify particular cost line items for


- inclusion in the budget. Costs found to be unallowable shall be identified and communicated to the Finance Committee and the accounting office.
- b. The Executive Director shall ensure that a list or table of allowed and disallowed costs is prepared and shared with all appropriate staff.
 - c. In accordance with NAMI Vermont's established budgeting process, it shall be the Executive Director's (or designee's) responsibility to prepare the budget for approval by the Board of Directors. Completion of this process will involve the Finance Committee members as well as the organization's accounting office.
 - d. Costs, as they incurred, shall be documented in accordance with NAMI Vermont's existing accounting practices.
 - e. The budget shall be periodically presented to the Board of Directors for review at least on a quarterly basis in accordance with NAMI Vermont's standard practice. Inconsistencies between grant requirements and actual expenditure/projected expenditure levels will be identified and resolved.
 - f. If requested by the appropriate Federal or non-Federal agency, the Executive Director, supported by staff or Board members, shall prepare a summary report showing status of all funds and projected year end outcomes.
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ADMINISTRATIVE, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEER POLICIES

11. NAMI Vermont Contract Signing Policy

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors September 16, 2009

Contracts are normally signed by the Executive Director. If there is no Executive Director in place, the following individuals on the NAMI Vermont Executive Committee will be responsible for signing contracts. If there is a conflict of interest (for example, an officer has an affiliation with the contractual organization), then the next individual in line can sign the contract:

- 1) Board President
 - 2) Vice President
 - 3) Secretary
 - 4) Treasurer
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12. NAMI Vermont Code of Ethics

Adopted by NAMI Vermont Executive Committee, September 2012

12.1 Introduction

We, as NAMI Vermont staff and board members, dedicate ourselves to carrying out the mission of this organization. To that end, we will do the following:

- Recognize that the chief function of NAMI Vermont is to serve the best interests of our constituency.
- Accept as a personal duty the responsibility to keep up to date on emerging issues and to conduct ourselves with professional competence, fairness, impartiality, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Respect the structure and responsibilities of the board, provide them with facts and advice as a basis for their making policy decisions, and uphold and implement policies adopted by the board.
- Keep the NAMI Vermont community informed about issues affecting it.
- Conduct our organizational and operational duties with positive leadership exemplified by open communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion.
- Exercise whatever discretionary authority we have under the law to carry out the mission of the organization.
- Serve with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness in carrying out the organization's mission.
- Demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fortitude in all our activities in order to inspire confidence and trust in our activities.
- Avoid any interest or activity that is in conflict with the conduct of our official duties.
- Respect and protect privileged information to which we have access in the course of our official duties.
- Strive for personal and professional excellence and encourage the professional development of others.

12.2 Policy

NAMI Vermont believes strongly that its members must uphold the highest standards of ethical, professional behavior, and so strives:

- To hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public in the performance of our duties.
- To act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance personal and professional honor, integrity, and dignity.
- To treat with respect and consideration all persons, in accordance with NAMI Vermont's Diversity and Inclusion policy.
- To engage in carrying out NAMI Vermont's mission in a professional manner.
- To collaborate with and support others in carrying out NAMI Vermont's mission.
- To build professional reputations on the merit of services and refrain from competing unfairly with others.

12.3 Board Code of Ethics

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors

To be familiar with and committed to the major responsibilities of a governing board including:

1. Setting mission and purposes
2. Appointing the Executive Director
3. Supporting the Executive Director
4. Monitoring the Executive Director's performance
5. Assessing Board performance

6. Participating in strategic planning
7. Reviewing educational and public-service programs
8. Ensuring adequate resources
9. Ensuring good management
10. Preserving institutional independence
11. Relating to the community
12. Serving as court of appeals
13. Supporting NAMI Vermont's fund-raising efforts
14. Devoting time to learn how NAMI Vermont functions—its uniqueness, strengths, and needs, its place in the mental health community
15. To carefully prepare for, regularly attend, and actively participate in board meetings and committee assignments.
16. To accept and abide by the legal and fiscal responsibilities of the board as specified by institutional charter, bylaws, and state statutes and regulations.
17. To vote according to one's individual conviction, to challenge the judgment of others when necessary, yet to be willing to support the decision of the board and work with fellow board members in a spirit of cooperation.
18. To recognize that the board chair alone speaks for the board.
19. To maintain the confidential nature of board deliberations.
20. To refrain from acting as spokesperson, or representing themselves as speaking on behalf of NAMI Vermont, without the President's authorization.
21. To understand the role of the board as an overall policy-making body and to refrain from participation in administrative work of the NAMI Vermont office.
22. To learn and consistently to use designated institutional channels when conducting board business (e.g., responding to staff and volunteer grievances, responding to inquiries concerning the status of an Executive Director search, etc.)
23. To comply with the NAMI Vermont conflict-of-interest policy and procedure.
24. To refrain from actions and involvement that might negatively impact NAMI Vermont's reputation, and to resign if such actions or involvement develop and prove harmful to NAMI Vermont.
25. To make judgments always on the basis of what is best for the organization as a whole.



13. Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality is a hallmark of professionalism. NAMI Vermont employees, volunteers, and other representatives:

- Ensure that all information that is confidential or privileged or that is not publicly available is not disclosed inappropriately.
- Ensure that all nonpublic information about other persons or firms acquired by NAMI Vermont personnel in dealing with outside firms on behalf of NAMI Vermont is treated as confidential and not disclosed.

13.1 Confidentiality Policy

It is the policy of NAMI Vermont that board members and employees of NAMI Vermont may not disclose, divulge, or make accessible confidential information belonging to, or obtained through their affiliation with NAMI Vermont to any person, including relatives, friends and business and professional associates, other than to persons who have a legitimate need for such information and to whom NAMI Vermont has authorized disclosure. Board members and employees shall use confidential information solely for the purpose of performing services as a board member or employee for NAMI Vermont. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Board members and employees must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places, such as restaurants, elevators, and airplanes, should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. In addition, board members and employees should be sensitive to the risk of inadvertent disclosure and should for example, refrain from leaving confidential information on desks or otherwise in plain view and refrain from the use of speakerphones to discuss confidential information if the conversation could be heard by unauthorized persons.

At the end of a board member's term in office or upon the termination of an employee's employment, he or she shall return, at the request of NAMI Vermont, all documents, papers, and other materials, regardless of medium, that may contain or be derived from confidential information in their possession.



14. Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Executive Committee, September 2012

14.1 Policy

Introduction: NAMI Vermont, as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, depends on charitable contributions from the public. Maintenance of its tax-exempt status is important both for its continued financial stability and for the receipt of contributions and public support. Therefore, the IRS, as well as state corporate and tax officials, view the operations of NAMI Vermont as a public trust that is subject to scrutiny by, and accountability to, such governmental authorities as well as to members of the public.

Consequently, a fiduciary duty exists between NAMI Vermont and its board and staff that carries with it a broad and unbending duty of loyalty and fidelity. The board and staff have the responsibility of administering the affairs of NAMI Vermont honestly and prudently, and of exercising their best care, skill, and judgment for the sole benefit of NAMI Vermont. Those persons shall exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions involved in their duties, and they shall not use their positions with NAMI Vermont or knowledge gained therefrom for their personal benefit. The interests of the organization must have the first priority in all decisions and actions.

NAMI Vermont employees and board members have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This policy establishes only the framework within which NAMI Vermont wishes its business to operate. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide general direction so that board members can seek further clarification on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when a board member is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for the board member, or for a relative, as a result of NAMI Vermont's business dealings. For the purpose of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the board member is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

No presumption of conflict is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside firms. However, if a board member has any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases, it is imperative that he or she discloses to an officer of NAMI Vermont as soon as possible the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Personal gain may result any time an employee, board member, or relative has a significant ownership, receives compensation or special consideration, as a result of any business dealings involving NAMI Vermont.

The materials, products, designs, plans, ideas, and data of NAMI Vermont are the property of NAMI Vermont, and should never be given to an outside firm or individual except through normal channels and with appropriate authorization. Any improper transfer of material or disclosure of information, even though it is not apparent that a board member has personally gained by such action, constitutes unacceptable conduct. Any board member who participates in such a practice shall be subject to disciplinary action by the full board.

Persons Concerned

This statement is directed not only to board members and officers, but to all employees who can influence the actions of NAMI Vermont. For example, this would include all who make purchasing decisions, all other persons who might be described as "management personnel," and all who have proprietary information concerning NAMI Vermont.

Areas in Which Conflict May Arise

Conflicts of interest may arise in the relations of directors, officers, and management employees with any of the following third parties:

- Persons and firms supplying goods and services to NAMI Vermont
- Persons and firms from whom NAMI Vermont leases property and equipment
- Persons and firms with whom NAMI Vermont is dealing or planning to deal in connection with the gift, purchase or sale of real estate, securities, or other property
- Competing or affinity organizations
- Donors and others supporting NAMI Vermont
- Agencies, organizations, and associations that affect the operations of NAMI Vermont
- Family members, friends, and other employees

Conflicting Interests

A material conflicting interest may be defined as an interest, direct or indirect, with any persons and firms mentioned above. Examples of such an interest include, but are not limited to:

- Owning stock or holding debt or other proprietary interests in any third party dealing with NAMI Vermont
- Holding office, serving on the board, participating in management, or being otherwise employed (or formerly employed) in any third party dealing with NAMI Vermont.
- Receiving remuneration for services with respect to individual transactions involving NAMI Vermont
- Using NAMI Vermont's time, personnel, equipment, supplies, or good will for other than NAMI Vermont approved activities, programs, and purposes
- Receiving personal gifts or loans from third parties dealing with NAMI Vermont. Receipt of any gift is disapproved except gifts of nominal value that could not be refused without discourtesy. No personal gift of money should ever be accepted.

Disclosure

The fact that one of the above interests exists does not mean that a conflict exists, or that if a conflict exists, it is material enough to be of practical importance, that it is necessarily adverse to the interests of NAMI Vermont. However, the existence of any of these interests shall be disclosed before any transaction is consummated. It shall be the continuing responsibility of board, officers, and management employees to scrutinize their transactions and outside business interests and relationships for potential conflicts and to immediately make such disclosures.

14.2 Procedure

Transactions with related parties may be undertaken only if all of the following are observed:

- Disclosure of a board member's potential conflict shall be made to the board chair, who shall bring these matters, if material, to the board.
- Disclosure of an employee's potential conflict shall be made to the Executive Director who shall determine whether a conflict exists and is material, and if the matters are material, bring them to the attention of the board chair.
- The board shall determine whether a conflict exists and is material, and in the presence of an existing material conflict, whether the contemplated transaction may be authorized as just, fair, and reasonable to NAMI Vermont. The decision of the board on these matters will rest in their sole discretion, and their concern must be the welfare of NAMI Vermont and the advancement of its purpose. In addition:
 - The material transaction shall be fully disclosed in the audited financial statements of the organization
 - The related party shall be excluded from the discussion and approval of such transaction
 - A competitive bid or comparable valuation must exist, and
 - The board shall document that the transaction is in the best interest of the organization.



15. GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT/INTERNAL CONFLICT POLICY

Adopted by Governance and Board (2/9/19). Governance amended/approved (11/21/22). Approved by Board (12/10/22)

A grievance/complaint/internal conflict resolution is defined as a remedy to a circumstance in which an individual takes issue with an action taken or decision made by staff, volunteer, or a NAMI Vermont member that cannot be resolved through informal conflict resolution avenues. An informal conflict resolution involves direct discussions and a spirit of compromise.

Instructions:

1. A formal grievance/complaint should be filed within 30 days following origin of the incident or the date of learning of the situation.
2. When a formal grievance/complaint is filed, all the information requested on the form must be provided. The description of the grievance/complaint should include the names of other persons involved in the situation.
3. The normal course of conflict resolution and the grievance complaint procedure is as follows:
 1. First try an informal conflict resolution process with the parties involved.
 - a. The parties involved (including as appropriate Affiliate members) should address the issue together to find resolution. If no resolution, take next step.
 - b. Parties should consult with the appropriate staff member. The staff member documents the grievance/complaint. If no resolution take next step.
 - c. The parties, including the staff member, should consult with the Executive Director in resolving the issue before filing a formal grievance/complaint. The Executive Director documents the grievance/complaint and develops an action plan. If not resolved within a reasonable amount of time, then the grievant may file a grievance form.
 2. The party files a grievance/complaint/internal form with Executive Director. The party has 30 days to file the grievance/complaint/internal form. The grievant is responsible for maintaining copies of the documentation for his or her records.
 3. The Executive Director shares the grievance/complaint/internal form with the Executive Committee.

Report of Investigation: After a grievance/complaint has been submitted, an investigative process will begin as follows:

1. An unbiased investigative team will be identified and formed (no fewer than three individuals) by the Executive Director and Executive Committee.
2. The investigative team will gather data and information including interviews with appropriate individuals that the team identified.
3. Conclusions and next steps will be documented in a written report by the investigative team no later than 90 days from when the investigation began. It is shared with the Executive Director and approved by the Board of Directors.
4. The Board of Directors and/or Executive Director will take appropriate action in a timely manner on the report's next steps and recommendations.

FORMAL GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT
THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED OUT

Name of Grievant (Please Print/Type):		Phone:	
Role/Position:		Email:	
Date, time and place of event leading to grievance/complaint:		Date you became aware of the event, <i>(if different)</i> :	
Detailed description of grievance/complaint including names of other persons involved, if any and any informal actions taken, if any			
(Provide additional documentation if necessary)			
Applicable sections of Bylaws, Policies, Employee Handbook, Volunteer Handbook:			
Proposed solution/action to grievance/complaint:			
Grievant: File a copy of this form with the Executive Director and retain a copy for your records, if necessary. You should receive a response (not necessarily a resolution) within 10 days.			
Steps Taken <i>(Please Print Names)</i>	Date	Grievant's Signature	Date
Communicated with:			
Communicated with:			
Communicated with:			
Filed with Executive Director on:			

See instructions on previous page for procedures to be followed in filing a formal grievance/complaint.

16. Conflicts/Mediation Processes

16.1 Between Board Members

NAMI Vermont Bylaws do not provide for a specific procedure to address conflicts within the Board. If direct discussion between the parties does not lead to resolution, it is advisable to engage the President as a mediator. One of the President's key roles is to help maintain harmonious relationships between Board members.

16.2 Between Board Members and the Executive Committee

Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023.

NAMI Vermont Bylaws provide no procedure for resolving disputes. Direct discussion with the involved parties is an essential first step in resolving problems. If that is inadequate, a mediator may be engaged.

16.3 Between Board Members and the Executive Director

Direct discussion with the involved parties is an essential first step in resolving problems. If that is inadequate, the President should be informed.



17. NAMI Vermont Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors on January 19, 2013; Amended/Rewritten, Approved by the Board 9/11/21; Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023.

NAMI Vermont supports, educates and advocates so that all communities, families, and individuals affected by mental illness or mental health challenges can build better lives.

NAMI Vermont staff, volunteers and board members are committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

NAMI Vermont shall actively recruit, engage, and serve Vermonters from every geographic area of the state. We embrace differences in race, culture, national origin, caste origin, citizen status, ethnicity, age, spiritual and religious belief, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, physical and mental ability, body size, education, and occupation, and we encourage participation by all members of the diverse community we serve. We shall not discriminate in our policies, provision of support, education, or advocacy work.

The NAMI Vermont Board of Directors will review its own composition and membership demographics to evaluate its alignment to those of the state on an annual basis.

All NAMI Vermont staff, volunteers and community members have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect at all times. All NAMI Vermont staff, volunteers and community members are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion during work, NAMI Vermont programs, events, and advocacy.

Any NAMI Vermont staff, volunteer and community member found to have exhibited any inappropriate conduct or behavior against others will be subject to clarification, discussion or disciplinary action by the President, Executive Director, or other NAMI Vermont leader.

Any NAMI Vermont staff, volunteer and community member who believe they have been subjected to any kind of discrimination that conflicts with NAMI Vermont's diversity policy and initiatives should seek assistance from the NAMI Vermont staff or NAMI Vermont board president to address the inequity.



18. Whistle Blower Policy and Procedure

Adopted by the NAMI Vermont Executive Committee September 2012

18.1 Policy

It is the policy of NAMI Vermont that employees or other public stakeholders have an open opportunity to bring to the attention of NAMI Vermont leadership, allegations of wrongdoing or malfeasance on the part of NAMI Vermont staff, officers, volunteers, and independent contractors. This includes but is not limited to violations of law, gross waste of NAMI Vermont funds or property, or abuse or neglect of fiduciary duty. Not by way of elimination but by way of explanation, these allegations will usually fall into the following categories in relation to the individual's connection with NAMI Vermont:

- Commission of criminal offences
- Instances of regulatory non-compliance
- Issues of probity and propriety, e.g. fraud, theft, bribery, corruption and embezzlement

Retaliation towards those who report such allegations will not be tolerated. Those who retaliate, interfere with investigations, or destroy or conceal evidence will be subject to immediate disciplinary actions to the full extent of the law.

Employees who willfully file complaints based upon information known by the employee making the allegations to be false or misrepresented, will be subject to disciplinary action or other remedies of law.

18.2 Procedures

The Chair of the NAMI Vermont Board and Finance Committee shall receive allegations pursuant to the provisions of this policy. Reports of alleged wrongdoing should be submitted in writing, and include a verifiable name, address, and telephone number of the reporter. Reports or allegations submitted anonymously may or may not be investigated.

The Board Chair or Finance Committee Chair, or their designee, will conduct an investigation of the complaint. Referrals shall be made to the appropriate law enforcement agencies when there is reason to believe that a crime may have been committed.

Investigations will be conducted promptly and a written report with investigative findings and conclusions shall be sent to the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors within ninety (90) days of the date on which the allegations were received.

An employee or applicant who believes that retaliation prohibited by this policy has occurred must, within sixty (60) days after the alleged prohibited action has taken place, file a complaint with the Board Chair. Each report of retaliation will follow the same investigative policy rule as outlined above. A prompt investigation will be conducted and a written report will be sent to the NAMI Vermont Board of Directors within ninety (90) days of the date on which the allegations were received. The Board of Directors will take appropriate action on the report's recommendations.

This policy is not to be substituted or used in place of other NAMI Vermont personnel policies for personnel matters other than those described above.



19. Liability and Mandatory Reporting

Adopted 4-25-2016 - Board Meeting; Amended/Rewritten, Approved by the Board 9/11/21.

19.1 NAMI Vermont Liability

All NAMI Vermont teachers, facilitators, trainers, volunteers, and staff who perform services for NAMI Vermont programs and events are covered by our liability insurance. NAMI Vermont is accountable for liability issues.

19.2 NAMI Liability Statement

NAMI's programs are designed to provide people and their families who are affected by mental illness with a deeper understanding of mental illness and with strategies for living with and recovering from serious mental illness. Program participants will recognize that they are not alone and feel empowered to advocate for better treatment and services for themselves and for family members.

NAMI programs should not be used to replace the specialized training and professional judgment of mental health professionals. We cannot, and do not, assume the role of a physician or therapist. Self-care information, and family and peer support are valuable assets in working through the many challenges faced by individuals and families who have been touched by serious mental illness. They are complementary to, but not substitutes for, professional assistance.

19.3 NAMI Vermont Mandatory Reporting Policy

- A mandated reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession or training, is legally required to report any suspicions of potential harm or neglect of a person to the relevant authorities. The specifics of these laws vary from state to state.
- NAMI Vermont program leaders are not considered mandated reporters by virtue of their NAMI training. If a NAMI Vermont leader has additional certification or licensure (e.g., Certified Peer Specialist, mental health counselor), and/or has been trained in the requirements around mandated reporting for the state of Vermont, they are obligated to follow those laws.
- A NAMI Vermont program leader who also has the designation of being a mandated reporter in Vermont is required by NAMI to inform the participants in the class/support group of their status even if their specific mandated reporter regulations do not require this disclosure.
- A NAMI Vermont program leader, who is not a mandated reporter in Vermont but who is concerned about something reported by a participant in their class/support group, should discuss those concerns with the NAMI Vermont office and follow the policies and procedures of NAMI Vermont, which must comply with the laws in that state.

19.4 Handling of crisis calls, specifically suicide.

Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023

If there is someone planning suicide, we shall refer them to or help them contact the suicide hotline, local counselor or emergency services, whichever may be needed.

- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255) - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- National Hopeline Network: 1-800-442-HOPE (4673) - www.hopeline.com
- Crisis Text Line: Text “VT” to 741741
- GLBT National Health Center - GLBT National Hotline 1-888-843-4564 - www.glnh.org
 - GLBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-PRIDE (7743)
 - Online Peer Support Chat: www.glnh.org/chat/index.html
 - Telephone volunteers in their teens and early twenties speak with teens and young adults up to age 25 about coming-out issues, relationship concerns, parent issues, school problems, HIV/AIDS, anxiety and more.

Please seek immediate professional help:

- If you or a family member have thoughts of suicide or of harming others;
- If you or a family member are unable to provide self-care for essentials of daily living;
- If you or a family member are abusing substances; and/or
- If you or someone else is in danger of being harmed.

NAMI Vermont cannot be held responsible for the use of the information we provide. Please always consult a trained mental health professional before making any decision regarding treatment of yourself or others.



20. NAMI Vermont Record Retention Policy

Adopted by NAMI Vermont Executive Committee January 2013

A. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

1. The purpose of this policy statement is to allow NAMI Vermont to identify, retain, store, and dispose of the organization's records in an appropriate, legally sound, and orderly manner.
2. Except as otherwise indicated, documents shall be retained for the number of years indicated in Part B.
3. Irrespective of the retention periods specified in Part B, upon (i) receiving notice of a lawsuit, government investigation, or other legal action against or involving the organization, or (ii) learning of circumstances likely to give rise to such an action, proceeding or investigation, all documents in any way relating to such matter shall be preserved and safeguarded.
4. No officer, director, employee, agent or member of the organization shall knowingly destroy a document with the intent to obstruct or influence the investigation or proper administration of any matter within the jurisdiction of any government department or agency or in relation to or contemplation of any such matter.

5. Employees are expected to utilize documentation practices as trained and are required to comply with the documentation standards outlined in this policy. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees with questions about this policy should consult with management or seek legal advice.
6. The Organization will maintain accurate and high-quality records electronically or in local, damage-proof storage for the duration of the time periods provided for in this policy. Once any such time period is complete, the records may be destroyed.
7. Documents maintained solely in electronic format will be backed up regularly.

B. RECORD RETENTION GUIDELINES

General Corporate Records	Retention Period
Articles of Incorporation and amendments thereto	Permanently
Bylaws	Permanently
Meeting Minutes	Permanently
Patents, trademark registrations, copyright registrations	Permanently
Property records (including leases, deeds, easements, rights of way, appraisals, costs, depreciation reserves, blueprints, plans, end-of-year trial balances, tax records)	Permanently
Membership ballots	3 years following the applicable vote
Membership applications	Membership term, plus 1 year
Correspondence relating to member discipline matters	Membership term, plus 5 years
Contracts	3 years

Accounting, Finance and Tax Records	Retention Period
Income tax returns and filings	Permanently
Audit reports of accountants	Permanently
Cash books	Permanently
Charts of accounts	Permanently
Federal and state tax bills and statements	3 years
Schedules, ledgers and other supporting documentation for financial statements and tax forms	7 years
Bank reconciliations	3 years
Checking records, including account statements, check register	3 years
Social security tax records	7 years
Accounts Receivable and payable	7 years
End-of-year financial statements	Permanently
Budget data	3 years
Banking records, including deposit and withdrawal records, bank statements	7 years

Expense accounts, approvals, petty cash records	3 years
Invoices to members, customers and vendors	7 years

Personnel Records and Payroll Documents	Retention Period
Resumes/applications and related employment materials, including background checks, letters of reference and related documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For applicants not hired • For employees 	2 years Employment term, plus 4 years
I-9 Forms Active employees Terminated employees	Employment term Employment term, plus the later of 3 years from date of hire or 1 year following termination of employment.
Compensation, job history and timekeeping records	Employment term, plus 4 years
FMLA/USERRA and related leave records	Employment term, plus 4 years
Performance appraisal/disciplinary action records	Employment term, plus 4 years
Benefit records	Employment term, plus 6 years
Records related to disputed issues involving external agencies or parties, wage charge or suit hour investigation by DOL, EEOC charge, arbitrations, court actions, etc	Employment term, plus 4 years
Records of accommodation to any disabled employee requesting such accommodation	Employment term, plus 4 years
Records of any sexual harassment complaints and the investigations and actions taken in response	Employment term, plus 4 years
OSHA & employee safety records	Employment term, plus 5 years
Workers Compensation claims	30 years after date of injury/illness

Insurance	Retention Period
Insurance records	Permanently
Accident reports	7 years
Appraisals	7 years
Worker compensation claims	7 years
Unemployment insurance	7 years

21. Computers and Equipment Policy

Approved by Governance on 2/20/17. Approved by Executive Committee on 2/24/17

NAMI Vermont provides access to computers, the internet, voicemail and other related technology. Employees and volunteers must use this technology for NAMI Vermont business purposes only, not personal use. NAMI Vermont reserves the right to access and review all electronic files, messages or other data, which are all considered the property of NAMI Vermont. Employees and volunteers should not have any expectation of privacy with respect to such electronic files, messages or other data.

All NAMI Vermont computers used by staff, volunteers and contractors are to be used for NAMI Vermont business, not personal use. For example: No personal programs, games, photos, music, videos, documents are to be accessed or downloaded to NAMI Vermont computers.

22. Communications and Media Policy

Approved by Board 9/9/2017

22.1 Overview

NAMI Vermont staff supervises communication and will use discretion based on NAMI Vermont's mission, values, and policies.

22.2 Spokesperson for Organization

Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023

Only the Board President and the Executive Director or their designee shall serve as a spokesperson for NAMI Vermont. Volunteers should identify themselves as "community members or advocates" when representing their own personal position. Volunteers should never represent themselves as spokespersons of NAMI Vermont or represent NAMI Vermont's official stance on issues.

22.3 Use of member/donor contact information

NAMI members have agreed to receive national, state, and affiliate level member communication via their submitted contact information. Members have the ability to opt out of this communication any time. NAMI Vermont member/donor contact information will not be shared or used outside of NAMI Vermont business.

22.4 Internal Communications

Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023

Internal communications are through meetings, use of virtual software products, Google Drive products (email, chat, calendar schedules); phone; and internet.

22.5 External Communications

External communications are guided by clear marketing, advocacy and public relations efforts. These may include a newsletter, website, social media channels, an annual report, advertising, public service announcements, promotional brochures and flyers, news releases, press conferences, and feature stories. Response to news media is done through the spokesperson(s) as named above.

Feedback is provided through evaluation forms for events; annual surveys; committee work; focus groups; debrief sessions; exit interviews; or informally through email, phone or in person. The results are shared with appropriate staff or volunteers to make improvements.

22.6 Crisis Communication

NAMI Vermont may be contacted for comments regarding tragedies involving mental illness. These crisis situations may include:

- An act of violence involving a person living with a mental illness or speculation around their mental health;
- Police actions while responding to a person experiencing a mental health crisis; and/or
- Suicide.

The Executive Director and/or President will determine the organization's response. The organization will additionally refer to NAMI's communication on the crisis and consult with the national Director of Communications when necessary.

22.7 Affiliate and Program Communication

Keep it NAMI. Presence on all social media is restricted to news and information relevant to NAMI Vermont's mission and NAMI Vermont business. All external (i.e. non-NAMI Vermont) links and articles shared via social media are limited to articles relevant to mental health and must include the disclaimer "Disclaimer: This news article does not necessarily represent views of NAMI Vermont or its members." All affiliate social media pages shall also include in the profile or information section the following message: "Likes/Retweets are not endorsements." Think of CNN, your family members and your boss. The internet is forever. Never post anything online that you wouldn't mind seeing quoted on CNN, or that you wouldn't mind your family members asking you about or that you couldn't justify to your boss. Be kind, be unerringly polite (even in the face of internet nastiness), respect a diversity of perspectives, and stay positive! The internet and social media sites in particular, are great tools to promote conversation and foster environments for intelligent discourse, but such discussion can easily descend into unabated, potentially abusive debate—affiliates should be leery of this and only post personal opinions under personal accounts.

Privacy. Many of our members and participants share sensitive information with us. Never post personal information, photographs or video of a person without their permission. NEVER post personal contact information.

22.8 Messaging

All email and social media streams for affiliates and programs will follow the guidelines below

1. No more than 300 words
2. Absent a compelling reason, no more than one email/post per week per stream (this quota includes recurring reminder emails)
3. Strictly NAMI business only
4. ALL group emails must use the blind carbon copy (bcc) function to protect privacy
5. Use only approved contact lists (submit new contact information to NAMI Vermont) as it is illegal to send unsolicited email or include people on a listserve without express permission

22.9 Affiliate Social Media

Amended, Approved by the Board 9/12/2023

All social media and internet presences, including those specifically managed by affiliates, will require pre-approval from the Marketing & Communications Coordinator, Executive Director or designee, or President (in that order) and have a designated volunteer(s) responsible for them. All presences will have admin access by the Marketing & Communications Coordinator of NAMI Vermont. Where possible, affiliate social media accounts shall publicly display NAMI Vermont contact information including website addresses and email contacts. All social media accounts will use a main handle or display name including “National Alliance on Mental Illness” or the acronym NAMI and the affiliate name. No individual or personally identifying information should be in the handle or display name.

Designated members of affiliates and group leaders may send recurring reminder emails informing members and attendees of scheduling details and other logistical information. Such recurring messages must be initially approved by the Executive Director or designee, or President (in that order).

22.10 Affiliate Use of Logo and Letterhead

Please contact the Marketing & Communications Coordinator for assistance with graphic design and appropriate use of the NAMI Style Guide.

23. Referral Policy

Approved by Governance on 6/19/17. Approved by Board on 6/24/17

NAMI Vermont does not endorse or recommend any private professionals, counselors, psychiatrists, and the like, however we may provide direction on where to find a list of resources.



24. Background Checks

Approved by Governance on 8/20/18. Approved by Board on 9/8/18

NAMI Vermont is committed to maintaining a safe environment for staff, consumers, volunteers, as well as external individuals and organizations.

The purpose of this policy is to enable NAMI Vermont to take appropriate measures during the recruitment and hiring process to ensure the protection of all NAMI Vermont staff, consumers and their families by performing, in its discretion which will be exercised reasonably, thorough background checks of potential hires, prior to employment.

The purpose of all background checks is to assure, to the extent possible, that the potential employee or volunteer is unlikely to harm an individual physically, psychologically or financially.

This policy is applicable to all NAMI Vermont staff, candidates for employment and volunteers.

When conducting background investigations, NAMI Vermont will adhere to all applicable State and Federal requirements. All results are considered confidential and are subject to State and Federal requirements as well as NAMI Vermont policies and procedures pertaining to personnel information.

Background checks may consist of, but not be limited to, the following:

- Verification of Social Security number;
- Criminal history in the state(s) where an individual resides or resided;
- Prior employment verification;
- Professional license verification, as needed;
- Educational verification;
- Child or elder abuse registry, as needed;
- Reference checks;
- Drug or alcohol screening;
- Sexual offender registry;
- Motor vehicle record;
- Credit history check;
- Fingerprinting, as needed;
- Other checks as determined by Human Resources

With regards to internal applicants, background checks will be conducted for an employee who applies and is selected for a supervisory/management position. In addition, background checks will be performed when a job offer is made to an employee for a non-supervisory/management job when the new position will involve direct care or transportation of NAMI Vermont consumers.

NAMI Vermont must have a signed and dated Consent and Disclosure form from final candidates, for hire or volunteer, prior to initiating a criminal records check, including prior written authorization that may be required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act if third parties are used in the background check process.

In reviewing the results of a background check on an individual candidate or volunteer, NAMI Vermont will review each person on a case-by-case basis and consider the following factors in order to determine whether there is a substantial relationship between any issues raised by the background check and the position:

- The nature, severity and intentionality of the offense(s);
- The reported elements of the offense(s);
- The individual's age at the time of the offense(s);
- Number and type of offense (felony, misdemeanor, traffic, other);
- Time elapsed from the last offense;
- The individual's probation or parole status;

- Whether the circumstances arose out of an employment situation; and
- Whether there is a pattern of offenses.

Any decision to accept or reject an individual is solely at the discretion of NAMI Vermont.

NATIONAL POLICIES

25. Membership Policy (as stated by NAMI national)

<https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMInet/BOD/NAMINationalBylawsCURRENT.pdf>

Membership

25.1 There shall be three categories of members:

- (1) Members ("Members")
- (2) Local Affiliates ("Affiliates")
- (3) State Organization ("Organization")

25.2 Voting Members. The following categories shall be voting members as provided below:

- (1) Members,
- (2) Affiliates, and
- (3) Organization

that accept the mission of the NAMI organization and pay the annual dues in the amount and manner established from time to time for voting members by resolution of the Board of Directors of NAMI.

(1) Members

(a) Definition - a Member is:

- (i) a person with a mental illness, or
- (ii) a relative or caregiver of a person with a lived experience of mental illness, or
- (iii) a friend of a person with a lived experience of mental illness

A Member may be one individual or a family of individuals living in one household that is counted as one for the purposes of paying dues and voting. A Member accepts the mission of NAMI and shall have paid dues to an Affiliate unless waived by the Affiliate. A Member shall have had his or her annual dues paid by the respective Affiliate to the respective Organization and to NAMI.

Members may become members through an "Open Door" policy that allows for a reduced dues payment. "Open Door" Members are defined by income or economic necessity, at the discretion of the Affiliate member or State Organization. "Open Door" Members shall have all the rights and privileges of members who pay full dues.

- (b) Voting rights - Members (i) shall be the voting members of Affiliates, (ii) shall nominate and elect the members of the Board of Directors and adopt and amend the bylaws of their respective Organization, and (iii) may otherwise be voting members of their Organization, all as prescribed by the Bylaws of their Organization, and (iv) shall also be the unit for purposes of determining the number of votes to be allocated to Affiliates in their voting by proportional representation within NAMI. A Member may support and work within several Affiliates but shall be a voting member of only one (1) Affiliate for NAMI and Organization purposes.

- (c) Non-discrimination: NAMI shall not discriminate against any person or group of persons on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture, language, national origin, caste origin, geographic origin, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, education, religion, faith, socioeconomic status or lived experience.



26. NAMI Signature Program Operating Policies (as stated by NAMI national)
Updated 2023: <https://my.nami.org/NAMI/media/Extranet-Education/2023-Ed-Operating-Policies.pdf>

These policies replace all previous versions of program policies (see next page)