

Starting NAMI Support Groups NAMI Connections and Family Support Groups

1. Get connected to an existing NAMI affiliate to support you as you begin. NAMI Georgia will:
 - a. Help you find an affiliate if you don't know of one.
 - b. Help you reach agreement on how you will work together (e.g., an affiliate ID is required to process membership dues so the parent affiliate will support you in that).
 - c. Help you go to the affiliate level when you have enough members.

You may contact NAMI Georgia through the Affiliate Development Committee by emailing Mimi Marlowe at mimimar1@aol.com.

2. Start looking for a place to meet where you:
 - a. Can use it every time so people get used to it.
 - b. Can eventually use it weekly
 - c. Have space for both family and consumer support groups to meet separately.
 - d. Decide on a day of the week and time. NAMI support groups run for an hour and one-half (e.g., 6:00pm – 7:30pm). Coordinate with other support groups (NAMI, DBSA, Double Trouble) in your area, where possible, to prevent same night meetings.
3. Decide where to advertise to bring in more attendees:
 - a. Church bulletins
 - b. Doctors offices
 - c. MH professionals (therapists, psychiatrists, counselors, etc.)
 - d. MH service providers
 - e. Other Support Groups in your area
4. Identify who will lead the group. Here are several ways you can do this:
 - a. You can be designated as a NAMI Support Group if there is at least one person certified by NAMI Georgia as a trained support group facilitator. Once you begin running the support group meetings you can identify other potential facilitators who could attend the next training session.

- b. If no one is trained as a NAMI facilitator, there are several options:
- Begin with a Share & Care support group. Have at least one person identified to lead the meeting. NAMI Georgia will provide some guidance on how to structure the meeting so it is a positive experience for people who attend.
 - See if a trained facilitator can come visit your location and run your initial meeting. This way people attending can see how the NAMI model works. NAMI Georgia will help with this.
 - Once you have the group going, identify potential candidates to take the facilitator training. Information on this training is attached.

Tips:

- Start with at least a monthly meeting on the same day/same week/same time. This helps people get accustomed to a schedule.
- If you want/need to run more meetings each month, do so. Just make sure there is someone identified to lead a Care & Share group or facilitate a NAMI support group.
- Keep looking for potential facilitators from the group, and send them to the quarterly trainings. The more you have, the lighter the load, and the easier to increase how often you meet. The more often you meet, the more people will come, providing even more facilitators and volunteers for other duties
- If you start out with only one group, either Family or Connections, plan to start the other group (Connections or Family) as soon as you can. Having both groups increases attendance and member retention.