



Supporting Mental Wellness in Our Communities

Suggestions for collaboration
between Girl Scout Councils
and NAMI Affiliates.



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Background: Organizations

Girl Scouts

At [Girl Scouts](#), we believe every girl has the power to change the world.

We're the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. And with programs from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl a chance to embrace a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success.

Even before COVID-19, we were already in the middle of a youth mental health crisis. The pandemic has only exacerbated the stress on kids' mental health. Girl Scouts is taking a more dedicated approach to supporting the needs of our movement and girls across the country through our Mental Wellness Initiative.

Learn more about [Girl Scouts](#).

For additional information, feel free to contact us.

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Find your local contact using our contact list:

<https://www.girlscouts.org/en/council-finder.html>

NAMI

Arlington, Virginia-based National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization and the leading voice on mental health. What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into an alliance of more than 650 local NAMI Affiliates and 49 NAMI State Organizations, raising awareness and providing support and education for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

NAMI's core values are Hope (the possibility of recovery, wellness, and the potential in all of us), Inclusion (embracing diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives), Empowerment (promoting confidence, self-efficacy, and service to our mission), Compassion (practicing respect, kindness, and empathy), and Fairness (fighting for equity and justice).

For additional information, feel free to contact us.

NAMI

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Find your local contact using our contact list:

<https://nami.org/findsupport>.

Girl Scouts' Mental Wellness Initiative and NAMI

Girl Scouts' Mental Wellness Initiative aims to give girls the tools they need to support their own mental wellness and to give Girl Scout council staff, volunteers, and parents/caregivers the resources they need to support girls and practice self-care. Girl Scouts has begun these offerings through activities like the [Resilient. Ready. Strong.](#) patch program, launched in 2021; trainings for volunteers; and foundational mental wellness workshops for Girl Scouts, which will launch in summer 2023.

To support young members across its 111 councils, Girl Scouts engaged NAMI experts to help develop these workshops for Juniors (grades 4–5), Cadettes (grades 6–8), and Seniors and Ambassadors (grades 8–12) that provide age-specific information and engaging activities about mental wellness, behavioral issues, and healthy habits.

Additionally, Girl Scouts engaged NAMI experts to help develop Mental Wellness 101, an online training course for council staff and volunteers to learn about girls' mental health and how to support Girl Scouts as they navigate age-specific challenges.

Now, through our national partnership, we are excited to connect state and local NAMI Affiliates and Girl Scout councils.

For more information on Girl Scouts and mental wellness outcomes, check out our 2020 report from the Girl Scout Research Institute: [Girls Speak Out About Mental Health.](#)

For more information on Girl Scouts and girls' leadership, see all the [research published by the Girl Scout Research Institute.](#)



Girl Scout Councils and NAMI Affiliates: Goals and Benefits

Girl Scouts and NAMI are teaming up to further our shared goals to support Girl Scouts' overall mental well-being.

Together, we hope to create and strengthen local relationships between Girl Scout councils and state and local NAMI Affiliates to make a difference for the mental health of Girl Scouts and our communities locally. Through NAMI's expertise, we hope this partnership will build Girl Scout councils' capacity to support the mental well-being of young people, volunteers, families, and communities while providing more resources and experiences to Girl Scout troops and councils.

In support of the partnership, we've created this collaboration guide to serve as a resource to Girl Scout councils and NAMI state and local Affiliates who are beginning to work together to serve our communities.



Through the partnership, Girl Scout councils and NAMI state and local Affiliates can collaborate to receive:

- Resources and expertise on mental health
- Referrals to community and peer supports
- Training/workshop support
- NAMIWalk events
- NAMI educational events
- Mental health advocacy (local/state/national) information and events
- Access to NAMI Ending the Silence (ETS) for School Professionals program, specifically recommended for school professionals, and adults who work with students
 - Access to education programs for youth, including Ending the Silence—*Girl Scouts recommends these programs be used as supplementary to forthcoming foundational mental wellness workshops for Girl Scouts*
- Access to NAMI Basics for parents/caregivers of a child showing symptoms of a mental health condition and other educational programs for adults

You can also find more information through the following links:

Girl Scouts' Mental Wellness & Inclusion program portal: <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/members/for-girl-scouts/badges-journeys-awards/mental-health-wellness-inclusivity-badges.html>

Girl Scouts' gsConnect site for mental wellness resources (*for Girl Scout staff only*): <https://girlscoutsconnect.sharepoint.com/sites/GirlExperience/SitePages/Girl-Scouts-Wellness-Initiative.aspx>

NAMI Kids, Teens, and Young Adults resource and information pages: [Kids, Teens and Young Adults | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

Get to know NAMI: NAMI Affiliates and NAMI State Organizations

What are NAMI Affiliate Organizations?

To become a NAMI Affiliate, each new organization must go through a process that's embedded in the NAMI Standards of Excellence. In order to establish and retain affiliation with NAMI, a NAMI Affiliate must: Embrace and conduct its business in accord with the NAMI Mission, Values, Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, NAMI Board of Directors Operating Policies and Procedures, NAMI Standards of Excellence, and other written guidance promulgated by NAMI; must be incorporated and have current IRS determination as a nonprofit [501(c) (3)] corporation, or may operate as part of and subject to the control of either the NSO or another incorporated NA; and must abide by its own bylaws and governing documents, as well as those of NAMI.

What is the difference between NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates?

To become a NAMI State Organization, you must go through a charter process where you demonstrate that your organization can meet specific criteria laid out by NAMI National and sign an agreement that they'll be compliant with these criteria. NAMI State Organizations (NSOs) provide support to the local NAMI Affiliates (NAs) in their state and offer an array of resources, programs, and tools in line with the NAMI Mission. You may reach out to your NSO if you don't have a local NAMI Affiliate or if you don't hear back in a timely manner from your local NA. You're also welcome to connect with both your local Nami Affiliate and State Organization. We all work together as a team!

NAMI State Organizations (NSOs) and NAMI Affiliates (NAs) serve their specific communities and offer an array of different resources, programs and supports in line with the NAMI Mission. If there's a local NAMI in your area, you may reach out to them directly to collaborate.

What can my Girl Scout council expect from an NA, NSO, and NAMI leaders?

Both NAMI State Organizations (NSOs) and NAMI Affiliates (NAs) offer a wide range of resources that are offered through dedicated staff and/or volunteers. What sets NAMI apart from many mental health organizations is that the education programs we offer are led by trained volunteers who have been through exactly what participants are going through. For example, if you take a NAMI Basics class, the leaders will be parents/caregivers who have a child who has a mental health condition. If you want to participate in a NAMI Connection support group, the support group leaders will be people who are living well with a mental health condition. While some staff and volunteers might have an education in or professional experience with mental health, they're a family member or individual with a mental health condition first.

To be a program leader in any NAMI education program, you go through a review process with the NA and then the NSO. If your application is approved, there's a weekend-long training that a leader must attend where they are trained in best practices in the program they'll be leading. NAMI education training is the same across the country, so you are ensured to receive the same information in a NAMI Basics class in California as you would in New York. Each education program and presentation receive evaluations at the end which are then used to improve any skills that leaders are lacking in. Fidelity to NAMI programming is an important piece of NAMI's offerings.

If your NSO and/or NA aren't comfortable partnering on a certain topic due to capacity or lack of expertise, or if they don't offer what you need for your council, they may have many contacts within the community that they can refer you to in order to help with your request.

Get to know NAMI: Programs and Activities

NAMI Programs and Evidence Based Designation:

NAMI national programs and presentations are developed by experienced professionals using the best available scientific and clinical information and teaching models. Many of our programs and presentations have been offered for decades in communities across the country.

NAMI actively works with researchers to conduct studies on our programs and presentations to measure their effectiveness. Based on the results of these studies, we can designate a program as an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). [On this page](#), you can find results from these studies as well as information about ongoing studies of our programs.

NAMI Basics:

NAMI Basics is a six-session education program for parents, caregivers, and other family members who provide care for youths (ages 22 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. This program is free to participants, 99% of whom say they would recommend the program to others. NAMI Basics is available both in person and online through [NAMI Basics OnDemand](#).

Through NAMI Basics you'll learn:

- The impact mental health conditions can have on your entire family
- Different types of mental health care professionals, available treatment options, and therapies
- An overview of the public mental health care, school and juvenile justice systems, and [resources to help you navigate these systems](#)
- How to advocate for your child's rights at school and in health care settings
- How to prepare for and respond to crisis situations (self-harm, suicide attempts, etc.)
- The importance of taking care of yourself
- Much, much more

NAMI Ending the Silence for School Staff:

one-hour presentation for school staff members and adults who work with students that includes information about warning signs, facts and statistics, how to approach students, and how to work with families. Offered in-person and/or live via zoom depending on local NAMI.

NAMI Ending the Silence for Families:

one-hour presentation for adults with middle or high school-aged youths that includes warning signs, facts and statistics, how to talk with your child, and how to work with school staff. Offered in-person and/or live via zoom depending on local NAMI.





NAMI Family Support Group:

NAMI Family Support Group is a peer-led support group for any adult with a loved one who has experienced symptoms of a mental health condition. Gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar experiences.

NAMI's support groups are unique because they follow a structured model, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard and to get what they need.

- Free of cost to participants
- Designed for adult loved ones of people with mental health conditions
- Led by family members of people with mental health conditions
- 60–90 minutes long and meets weekly, every other week, or monthly (varies by location)
- No specific medical therapy or treatment is endorsed
- Confidential

NAMIWalks:

NAMIWalks is the largest, most vibrant mental health event series in the country. Over the past year alone, NAMIWalks has surged to new levels of popularity and impact, leading NAMI to be recognized as the Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Organization of the Year!

Taking place in more than 120 locations, NAMIWalks invites participants to share their stories, build community, and walk together to achieve Mental Health for All.

While fundraising is encouraged for many when participating in NAMIWalks, there is no obligation to do so. All funds raised directly support your local NAMI State Organization or Affiliate's mission of education, advocacy, support, and public awareness. Due to limitations on fundraising as a part of the Girl Scout program, we recommend participation in NAMIWalks to be an awareness-raising activity only. Find the event closest to you at www.namiwalks.org, or discuss with your local NAMI Affiliate.

Creating Local Collaborations

Find your local contacts.

For Girl Scout Councils

To get started, please use the NAMI [contact list](#) and materials to identify contact information of your local NAMI State or Affiliate Organization.

You are encouraged to send an introductory email to your NSO and/or NA. Please be sure to include the following information:

- Your name and title
- The size and location of your council
- A description of the work your council has done, or is embarking on, around mental wellness and mental health
- Any specific upcoming events that may benefit from the inclusion of NAMI presenters

For NAMI Affiliates

To connect with one of Girl Scouts' 111 councils, use the [Girl Scout council finder](#).

If you are contacting a council for the first time (or for the first time in a while) and you have not yet been provided a local contact, you can often find contact information on your local council's website.

Although staff structures at each council may vary, we recommend that you connect with a member from one of the following council teams:

- Program staff (often referred to as the Girl Experience team)
- Volunteer support staff
- Staff who support community partnerships

Identify opportunities to collaborate.

Before initiating a NAMI and Girl Scout collaboration, we recommend first connecting in person or virtually to get to know one another and discuss possibilities for collaboration.

Here are a few recommendations to help you prepare:

- Begin initial conversations with examples of any past collaborations and a few concrete ideas for collaboration and other ways to work together.
- Identify GS council priorities, what you are currently offering, what your needs are, and current opportunities for collaboration and volunteering.
- Share any upcoming Girl Scout events that might be good opportunities to partner.

Consider using the template on the following page to get started during your first meeting.

Agenda Template

Date: _____

Time: _____

1. Get to know one another. Exchange names, contact information, and experience with everyone who should be included and informed on this work as well as who can be contacted as a backup.

Name	Contact Information	Experience

2. Connect on joint missions and objectives. Discuss your hopes for the mental wellness collaboration.

- What local mental wellness initiatives are you currently focused on?
- What needs are you currently seeing in your local community?
- How might each party benefit from this collaboration?
- What opportunities might exist for cross-promotion?
- How might Girl Scout members, volunteers, families, and parents benefit from NAMI expertise and opportunities?
- How does each party hope to benefit from this collaboration?

3. Choose the best type of engagement. Which types of partner engagement do both parties most need and are most interested in?

Girl Scout council talking points:

- What are the basic goals of mental wellness program(s) your council is currently offering for Girl Scouts?
- How might NAMI support our council's program and/or volunteer needs?
- Does your Girl Scout council have a specific need for NAMI experts/volunteers in implementing Girl Scout workshops and/or trainings?
- If your council has a mental wellness advisory board, how would you like to involve NAMI? How will this

collaboration benefit both your council and NAMI?

- Can NAMI provide a mentor for a highest award Girl Scout working on a relevant project?

NAMI Talking Points

- Are there any Girl Scout troops that might benefit from NAMI Ending the Silence, In Our Own Voice, or other locally offered youth and young adult programs?
- Is your council interested in offering volunteer opportunities to any Girl Scouts?
- NAMI has local NAMI Walks to come together as one voice for mental health. Do councils have any Girl Scouts who would be interested in participating? Are there any opportunities for local NAMI Affiliates to provide these opportunities to Girl Scouts?
- Would you be willing to encourage adult advocates and educators to sign up for NAMI newsletters?

4. Work together. Discuss how you will work together and set expectations on both sides.

- What are your first steps to collaborate?
- How will you keep in touch?
- Are there any work practices that each team should know about? Share any basic information about how you work to avoid misunderstandings in the future. For example, is the council's office closed on Fridays? Does NAMI have a cadence for when people are typically available to check in?

Agenda Template, continued

5. Identify or plan an event where NAMI can present to Girl Scouts. When you are ready, decide on an event where a NAMI presentation could support Girl Scouts, volunteers, and/or caregivers' understanding of mental health. Discuss how you will work together and set expectations on both sides. Then create a plan for the event.

- How could NAMI play a role in your upcoming events or facilitate learning for particular badges (depending on council needs)?
- If the NAMI Affiliate and/or State Office is invited to support an event, who will facilitate each part of the agenda? What badge activities will you include?
- If there are any marketing materials for the planned event, how will the branding and/or contact information for both organizations be handled?

6. Create a plan for ongoing collaboration. Discuss if there are other opportunities to partner and provide NAMI expertise, resources, or experiences for Girl Scouts.

- Are there any future events that might be good opportunities to partner?
- When does each organization set its calendar?
- How much planning time is needed before an event?
- How often will you check in with one another? How else might you communicate?
- Do you have basic information (e.g., newsletters) that each organization should receive?
- What potential opportunities exist that you might decide to explore later?
- Share any successful events and/or partnerships with NAMI (gspartnerships@nami.org) and Girl Scouts (mentalwellness@girlscouts.org).

Planning Girl Scout and NAMI Events: Timeline

If NAMI Affiliates and Girl Scout councils have decided to partner on an event, program or training for Girl Scouts, volunteers, and families, please use this suggested timeline for co-planning events.

Please note: *Girl Scout councils and NAMI Affiliates may vary in how far out they need to schedule events.*

Four to Eight Weeks Before the Event

- Determine the event date and details.
- Determine the badge for the event; the target age group; and the event format, including whether the event is in person or to be held virtually.
- Determine which Girl Scout council staff and/or volunteers will be present.
- Secure NAMI presenter(s) (To note: NAMI employees and/or volunteers may be asked to complete volunteer registration and/or additional preparation for Girl Scout councils).
- The Girl Scout council will determine registration processes, any event costs, and create the sign-up form. Create advertising flyers with a registration link and discuss co-branding as appropriate.
- If the event is virtual, determine which online system you'll use, who will run the technology, etc.

Three or More Weeks Before the Event

- The Girl Scout council shares detailed event plans with NAMI Affiliate and/or presenter(s).
- NAMI Affiliate helps determine which NAMI staff and/or volunteers will attend and present.
- If the council chooses, invite specific troops.
- Advertise on the Girl Scout council's website and social media.

One to Two Weeks Before the Event

- Finalize the PowerPoint template for the event.
- Send a reminder email to all attendees with online event information.
- Send a reminder email to all volunteers.
- Organize all materials for the event (e.g., coordinate drop-off or pickup of any physical materials that girls may use at home).
- If virtual, consider holding a run-through of the event.

The Day of the Event

- Provide an event summary and additional resources to participants via email.
- Provide information to participants on NAMI opportunities.
- Provide information to participants on upcoming Girl Scout events and opportunities.

Additional Information and Opportunities

For NAMI Affiliates:

NAMI Staff and Volunteers Who Are Also Girl Scout Alums

If you were a Girl Scout at any point in your life, consider signing up for the [Girl Scout Network](#), a powerful community of adults—both Girl Scout alums and supporters from across the country—who believe in preparing girls to be our future leaders.



For Girl Scout Councils:

For Parents, Caregivers, and Volunteers

NAMI Affiliates provide free, peer-led education and support groups for individuals with a mental health condition and family members. Learn more about these offerings on the [NAMI website](#) and by [inquiring with your local NAMI Affiliate](#).

*Important to note that education and support group offers differ in each area. Check with your local NAMI to see what's available in your community.

Additional links and resources to share:

Web resources for kids, teens, young adults, and their families:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults>

Youth and young adult resources:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Youth-and-Young-Adult-Resources>

Advocate for change: <https://www.nami.org/Advocacy>

En Español: <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Hispanic-Latinx/La-salud-mental-en-la-comunidad-latina>