



# Advisor Manual

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The Advisor's Manual to guiding and overseeing a NAMI on Campus High School Club



# NAMI On Campus High School - Advisor Manual

## Welcome Advisors!

Congratulations on playing a very important role in the improvement of mental health awareness and stigma reduction on your high school campus. As an Advisor of the NAMI on Campus (NOC) High School Club, you will have a significant impact on the student members, on the school, and on your peers. By stepping into the role of Advisor of the NOC Club, you are making a statement to students that you believe mental wellness is important. You are also acknowledging that mental health affects us all and that accepting and supporting others with mental health conditions is a priority. Please note, that to be a club advisor, you must have some background in the mental health field or have gone through some kind of mental health first aid or mental health training.

NAMI On Campus High School was created to make the climate on high school campuses supportive and more accepting of people with mental illness, while also educating students and faculty about mental health. Studies have shown that stigma is the greatest barrier to college students seeking help for a mental health condition. Our goal is to reduce stigma at a younger age to better position young people to address their mental health concerns earlier on and create lifelong advocates.

You are about to start on an incredible experience, one that will teach you skills to help educate students about something that affects us all, in one way or another: mental health and wellness.

- About 1 out of 5 young people between the ages of 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder that impacts their daily lives.
- Half of lifetime disorders begin by age of 14, but there is an average of 10 years before these individuals seek out treatment due to stigma
- On any given day, 20% of students in a classroom are experiencing mental health conditions. They can be brief and mild, or they can be more serious and last a lifetime.
- Of those 20%, 80% will go undiagnosed and untreated.
- Left untreated, mental health conditions can worsen and become debilitating. They can lead to other issues such as substance abuse, truancy, problems with peers, problems with parents, victimization, dropping out of school, homicide, and suicide.<sup>1</sup>

These statistics tell us that most people know someone with a mental health issue, whether they are aware of it or not. Emotional distress isn't always noticeable. People can be suffering in silence or using negative coping skills to deal with their emotions.

This manual contains resources, information, ideas, and strategies to help you in leading the NOC Club. We understand this is an additional time commitment in your already busy schedule, and have taken a proactive approach in development of both the Advisor and Student manual to alleviate additional work

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<sup>1</sup> (Facts on Children's Mental Health in America)

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where possible. As you'll see in the Student manual (included in the back of your Advisor binder), templates, examples, and ideas have already been collected in order to make the success of the club as realistic as possible.

At NAMI, we are grateful to individuals like you for being the kind of daily role models for the next generation that our world needs. Thank you for all that you do!

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## Acknowledgements

The NAMI On Campus High School (NCHS) program was developed in 2013 by NAMI California, with permission to pilot from NAMI National, to promote the voices of students within the high school environment and increase awareness, advocacy, and acceptance for students experiencing a mental health condition. The launch of this program was supported by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63) grant. The high school program was envisioned by NAMI California's CEO Jessica Cruz and rolled out by their COO Steven Kite and the NAMI CA staff. Today they partner with both state and private organizations to move this mission forward. Its goal is to give high school students the education and tools at an early phase of their lives so that they are better equipped to recognize mental health conditions in themselves or others, to access the services they need sooner, and to reduce stigma on high school campuses. As of 2024 NAMI California and their affiliates support 150 NCHS clubs statewide and growing.

NAMI CA provides support through materials such as Student and Advisor Manuals, Activity guides, and Club Toolkits. NAMI CA holds NAMI on Campus High School Info Webinars as well as the 5-hour Trainings for all our new clubs and clubs with new leaders. In addition, the clubs are supported through our local NAMI Affiliates in partnership to provide Ending the Silence Presentations, resources, and attend and support local events.

For any questions specific to these materials, please contact [nchs@namica.org](mailto:nchs@namica.org).

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# Manual

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## About NAMI

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### Who is NAMI?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest nonprofit, grassroots organization that provides support, education and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and friends. Founded in 1979, the NAMI organization consists of a national office, 50 NAMI State Organizations, and more than 1,000 local NAMI Affiliates nationwide.

### What Does NAMI Do?

NAMI Local Affiliates offer programs, classes, and support groups to people who either have a mental illness themselves, or a friend or family member of someone with a mental illness. We incorporate the lived experience of people who have lived with mental illness into our programs so they can share their journeys to recovery and provide real examples of hope. The NAMI State Organization (NSO) provides program support, training, and assistance to affiliates throughout the state, and also provide advocacy at the state level.

### The NAMI On Campus High School Project

In 2013 the NAMI on Campus High School Club program was developed, with permission to pilot from NAMI National, by NAMI California to promote the voices of students within the high school environment, and increase awareness, advocacy, and acceptance for students experiencing a mental health condition. Its goal is to give high school students the education and tools at an early phase of their lives, so they are better equipped to recognize mental health conditions in themselves or others to get the services they need sooner, and to reduce stigma on campus.

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## Getting Started

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### Know Your Reasons

Whether you are leading the charge of bringing NAMI On Campus to your school or have been recruited by eager students to serve as the Advisor, it's important to know your own reasons for wanting to get involved. You'll probably be asked about your participation and your interest in mental health in many ways and in lots of places; for example, board meetings, parent-teacher conversations, in class, by your administration, by the media, etc.

**Knowing why you are dedicated to serving in an important role in the club will demonstrate to your students about passion, commitment, and being an advocate.** If you aren't sure exactly why the club appeals to you, try writing down as many ways you can imagine the NOC Club being a positive influence on campus. Chances are, at least a few of those reasons are ones you can really get behind and identify as your reasons for getting involved.

### Talk With Your Administration

As soon as you are involved with bringing a NOC Club to your campus, you should set up a time to speak with your administration about your plans, the goals of the club, and the reasons the club should have the administration's full support. Check back to the section in the Student Manual about "Benefits" to be familiar with benefits of implementing the NOC Club on your campus. It's always a good move to have at least one administrator on your side early on. They will help mitigate any issues and assist with navigating the process of starting a club up on campus. It's also always important to know the policies of your school and district regarding student-led programs and clubs. Keep in mind there are different layers of procedures that guide a district's vision: at the school, at the district, and at the school board level. Be sure you are in compliance at all these levels.

In the Student Manual, student leaders were instructed to check with their school about policies for starting and maintaining a club to ensure they were in line with school rules. We encourage you to do the very same! Check with your administration about anything you should know about advising a club so you can begin this journey on the right track. It is ultimately up to you to ensure you are following all school and district rules and policies.

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## Guiding Principles and Role of the Advisor

As the Advisor of the NOC Club, you will be taking an active role in changing the culture on your campus to be more educated and aware of mental health and wellness. The student leaders will need your guidance, support and experience in order to learn about mental health and wellness, running a club, launching a campaign, and being a strong leader. Below are a few key principles that will help guide you as the Advisor of the NOC Club.

### Empowering Student Leaders

The student leaders of NOC will have lots of great ideas, enthusiasm and experience to share that will help shape the club. It is important to remember they are still students with limited experience in managing a club and probably no experience launching a mental health movement on campus. Your role as the Advisor is to support and guide them through the learning process but let them do the leading.

### Plan for the Future

When thinking of the club, all members and advisors should think in terms of a larger vision and not just what they will currently be affected by; how will individual actions help shape the club for next year? What about in 5 years when the current student leaders are no longer there? Think ahead and make decisions that will serve as succession-planning for the club. Make plans for how to make the club a hit now and in the future. Set a plan for annual presentations to school leadership, administration, the district leadership and the school board on the annual plans and the long-term vision of NOC.

By having the NOC Club at your school, you are going to be improving your school climate by reducing stigma and discrimination associated with mental health and wellness. This is an ongoing journey and can have a lasting change; it will likely take a few years of successful NOC implementation on campus to reach that goal.

### Lead by Example

People all over campus will be looking to the NOC Club to see what it's all about and what it means to be "aware" of mental health and wellness. Show your support and belief in the club by being a role model of anti-stigmatizing behavior and acceptance of mental illness as a medical issue, even when you aren't with the club or are teaching your regular class. Take opportunities to educate those around you about mental health and wellness and communicate with them about NOC.

### Respect and Maintain Boundaries

The NOC Club could bring up emotions, reactions or other sensitive topics around campus. **Understand your school's policies on mandated reporting and confidentiality, and follow them exactly as you**

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**should.** Remember as a school employee, you are a mandated reporter so know your district's policy regarding the state mandate to report safety concerns (child abuse, suicidal ideation, threats to other students). Students may disclose prior or current issues as part of participation in the club; and the Advisor should be able to make the appropriate referral to school or district support. **Students should clearly understand that you are a mandated reporter and that you must report abuse, neglect or harm to yourself or others.** Know your resources. You should be familiar with school, district and community resources.

## Know What You Are – And What You Aren't

Your primary role is to guide the club to increase awareness about mental health and wellness and help reduce stigma and discrimination. It's important to remember and convey to club members, their families, faculty and students that the NAMI On Campus High School Club is not a therapy or support group, and you are not a doctor or diagnostician. It is not your job to diagnose, medically advise or prescribe treatment. You are a mental health resource, a trusted adult and a source of support for the students. They should feel comfortable coming to you for assistance, which is when you will listen, provide support, and direct the student to the appropriate resources.

Part of your role is to advise other staff and faculty of the goal and vision of the NOC Club and to clearly communicate that it is not a therapy or support group, and that students should **not** be sent to you for counseling (unless you are the official counselor or campus psychologist).

## Below are the general responsibilities of a NOC Club Advisor:

- Attend every club meeting or event
- Set the date and time of each NOC Club meeting for the school year
- Set a date for the end of the year NOC Club celebration
- Help students develop a project plan for the year
- Schedule the date and time for the annual presentation to school faculty, school and district leadership, and school board (depending on the size of your district, it may take several months to get on a school board agenda)
- Oversee club operations (reserving meeting locations, etc.)
- Provide guidance to the club members on activities, leading meetings, etc.
- Be one of many trusted adults for students to come to with concerns, questions and if they need help for themselves, a friend, or a family member
- Be a positive role model of anti-stigma behavior
- Complete all reporting requirements to the NAMI State Organization
- Help facilitate resolutions if conflicts with students arise
- Provide guidance on the officer election process
- Help students with fundraising and management of budgets and funds
- Create a safe, accepting, and open-minded atmosphere in which to thrive

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## Mental Health – Best Practices & Resources

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### Confidentiality

The Advisor of a NOC Club needs to have a very clear understanding of the confidentiality policies of their school and school district. Because of the nature of the club, there may be very open and honest discussions, either with the group or a student might approach you one-on-one. It is up to you to know and understand when you should be a trusted adult and just listen; and when you need to refer the student to appropriate resources.

**You should immediately seek professional help if any of the following occurs:**

- Someone shares that they hurt themselves (such as cutting, burning, etc.) or others
- Someone shares that they are being hurt by someone else
- Someone shares that they think about or are planning to hurt themselves or others
- Someone shares that they think about suicide, is planning suicide or has attempted suicide
- Someone is in distress and needs assistance

Appropriate actions and referrals will need to be made if any of the above occurs, or if any other concerning behavior or statements are noticed. Students should never be promised the type of confidentiality that exists in a patient/doctor relationship. As stated before, you are a mandated reporter.

### Recognizing a Student in Distress

High school is a set of years that typically consist of a lot of changes for a young person. In addition to going through the physical changes of adolescence, they are also encountering many new things at one time:

- New friends
- Peer pressure
- Self-identification
- Sexual orientation
- Relationships
- Driving
- First job
- Family responsibilities
- Social responsibilities
- College/After high school plans
- Grades and school performance

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- Drugs and alcohol experimentation

With so many new experiences and pressures, it can be challenging to differentiate between a student that is going through a difficult experience and one that is suffering from early signs of a mental health condition.

**Below are some of the common signs and indicators of a student that is in distress.**

- Withdrawing from social activities or friends
- A sudden drop in school engagement, like quitting a sport, not attending class, or not doing schoolwork
- Challenges with concentrating, focusing, or having rational thoughts or conversations
- Heightened awareness and sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells, or touch
- Sudden low energy and lack of interest to get involved with any activity
- A feeling of being disconnected from the people around the student
- Inflated and exaggerated beliefs about personal abilities and powers; the student may believe he or she is the key to events occurring or has deeper understanding of life
- Paranoia; continual suspiciousness and a continual nervous feeling
- Changes in sleep, eating and hygiene habits
- Angry or emotional outbursts
- Dramatic changes in moods, from one severe mood to another<sup>2</sup>

## SAFETY RISK SIGNS

If a student ever exhibits the following signs, he or she may be a safety risk to him or herself, or to others.

- Communications, verbal or written, that include suicide, death, injury, or severe despair
- Severe hopelessness, depression, isolation and withdrawal
- Statements to the effect that the student is going away for a long time

In these cases, you should stay with the student and contact the appropriate resources for help immediately.<sup>3</sup> If your school has a mental health counselor on staff or if an emergency plan has been established, contact the designated person right away for support and follow the steps of the emergency plan. As an Advisor, one of the activities you could plan is to have the students campaign for their school and district to implement a suicide pre- and post-vention plan that adheres to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) *Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools* guide.

## Referrals

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<sup>2</sup> (Warning Signs of Mental Illness)

<sup>3</sup> (Carr, 2011)

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If you notice some of the above signs in a student, the appropriate response is to refer the student to services that can help get an official diagnosis and come up with a treatment plan. You should know and be aware of your school’s policies on making these types of referrals. Some schools may require paperwork to be completed or other steps to document the referral.

When speaking with a parent or guardian about their child, use the following guidelines:

- Understand the parents may view this referral as a family catastrophe
- Understand the parents may not take your concerns seriously
- De-stigmatize mental illness; make comparisons between mental illness and other physical ailments, like heart disease or diabetes
- Emphasize that early intervention and treatment are essential treatment steps for their child
- Provide parents with resources and next steps; let them know there are resources that can help them navigate this process before and after having an official diagnosis.
- Refer them to their local NAMI Affiliate. The affiliate will have classes, programs, resources and information on navigating through mental health resources. The affiliate can be a great source of support to them.

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## What to do if a Mental Health Emergency Occurs

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A mental health emergency is a situation in which a person is not able to cope with their emotions or surroundings. No matter what a crisis may look like, they should always be taken seriously and help should be found immediately. If a person is in a mental health crisis or emergency, they might have the following symptoms:

- Extreme anger or panic
- Talking about suicide, or other types of self-harm
- Talking about hurting others
- Being violent or disruptive
- Not able to speak clearly (for example, slurred or garbled speech; disjointed thoughts)
- Being confused or “out of it”

If someone is showing these signs, whether it’s during a NOC Club meeting or not, you should immediately call for help. Your high school might have an emergency hotline already established. If there is one, make sure everyone in your club knows it.

**You can always call 9-1-1 for immediate help.**

**Or call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 OR 1-800-273- 8255**

If a person is acting out of control or has a tendency towards violence, you should never try to approach them. A trained mental health professional is the right person to handle getting close to a person who is in distress.

## Campus Resources

A requirement for having a NOC Club is that the high school must have access to a designated mental health staff person available 5 days a week. These staff members are your direct resource for mental health guidance and should be able to assist you.

Below is a worksheet for you to complete with the important phone numbers, email addresses, and other details about your resources. We have also included national resources for your benefit. It is important that you completely fill out this form at the beginning of each school year and keep it up to date. If an emergency does occur, having the appropriate resources already identified will be essential.

This contact sheet will also be used in the event you are unable to attend a meeting and have recruited another faculty member to attend in your place. He or she will need to know this information prior to substituting for you.



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## EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**Call 911 for Emergency, Fire, or Police**

### ON CAMPUS

School Mental Health Services: \_\_\_\_\_

School Mental Health Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

School Emergency Plan is located: \_\_\_\_\_

### LOCAL

School District Crisis Line: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Children's Shelter: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Youth Services: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Suicide Prevention: \_\_\_\_\_

Substance Abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health: \_\_\_\_\_

Local CPS: \_\_\_\_\_

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## NATIONAL

### **NAMI**

**Helpline: (800) 950-6264**

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raise awareness and build a community for hope for all of those in need. The Information Helpline is an information and referral service which can be reached by calling 1 (800) 950-NAMI (6264), Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.- 6 p.m., EST.

### **Boys Town National Suicide Hotline**

Provides short-term crisis intervention and counseling and referrals to local community resources. Counsels on parent-child conflicts, marital and family issues, suicide, pregnancy, runaway youth, physical and sexual abuse, and other issues. Operates 24 hours, seven days a week.

### **Covenant House Hotline**

**800-786-2929**

Crisis line for youth, teens, and families. Gives callers locally-based referrals throughout the United States. Provides help for youth and parents regarding drugs, abuse, homelessness, runaway children, and message relays. Operates 24 hours, seven days a week.

### **National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders (ANAD)**

**630-577-1330**

National eating disorder non-profit organization. Treatment referral, support groups, conferences, education, statistics and events.

### **Mental Health America**

**800-969-6642**

Information on mental health topics and referrals, access to an info specialist. Operates Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### **National Youth Crisis Hotline 4663**

**800 442-4673/800-448-**

Provides counseling and referrals to local drug treatment centers, shelters, and counseling services. Responds to youth dealing with pregnancy, molestation, suicide, and child abuse. Operates 24 hours, seven days a week.

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## Working with Student Leaders

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### How to Nurture Student-Led Meetings

The student leaders should be in the driver's seat for club meetings and events. Your role as the Advisor is to offer support, guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout the process of running meetings and events.

Along with learning a great deal about mental health and wellness and stigma and discrimination, students should also be learning important leadership and facilitation skills. As an adult in the workforce, you know how essential it is to develop good listening, public-speaking, planning and follow-up skills. The student leaders of your club should have opportunities to try out and hone these skills during meetings.

Below are a few ideas on ways to help students excel before, during, and after meetings:

### Before a Meeting

- Work with the student leaders to decide on a location, meeting date and time. Provide assistance if they have to navigate your school's room reservation process or need a staff signature.
- Using the agenda templates and guidelines in the Student Manual, help the student leaders with putting together an agenda of what they want to cover in their meeting.
- Ask the students what they want to include in fliers and promotions for the club. If they leave something important out (like date or time), remind them of why having those details is so essential.
- Encourage the students to select a few ice breakers or activities to have ready to go in the meeting.
- Decide with your students a way of communicating with you during the meeting if they need help or want you to jump in. This could be a code word, a phrase, or a hand signal. Same goes for you to let them know if they are running out of time or should move on to another topic.
- See if there are community meetings, school board meetings, or local NAMI Affiliate meetings you can attend with the students to watch a professional meeting. Discuss afterwards how that meeting was facilitated and how those can be implemented in NOC club meetings.

### During Meetings

- Take notes during NOC Club meetings and discuss strengths and areas to work on with students
- Watch closely for the secret hand signals or code words to let you know you are needed to intervene.
- Be an active participant in the meeting; this can mean sitting in the circle with other student

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members, voting, joining in on discussion or engaging in the ice breaker. Club meetings should not be spent on other tasks or spent at your desk. The more you enmesh yourself with the group, the more cohesive the club overall will be.

- As challenging as it may be, try to refrain from jumping into a facilitator role and directing the meeting. You may hear a discussion and see it as an excellent opportunity to move the conversation in a certain direction, but it is up to the student leaders to learn to steer the ship. Make note of this in your feedback and share it as a tip with them after the meeting.
- A good resource for running meetings is Robert’s Rules of Order (<http://www.robertsrules.org/>)

## After the Meeting

- Gather with the student leaders and share with them what went really well in the meeting. Especially in the first few meetings while students are getting their feet wet, it will be important to give lots of positive reinforcement and praise.
- Gently discuss the areas for improvement. Give concrete examples of ways to improve the meetings. For example, if the meeting ran longer than it should, try suggesting to the students that a goal for the next meeting will be to end on time.
- Ask the students how they think the meeting went and get their feedback on what worked and what could be done differently.
- Talk about the action items that resulted from this meeting and help with creating the next meeting agenda.
- Make sure the student leaders are aware of timelines of upcoming events and help them prepare in advance.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflict among high school students is common. Don’t be discouraged about the NOC Club if you see a few conflicts arise during the school year. Students are discussing sensitive, personal topics relating to mental health, and that can sometimes cause tension. If a conflict does arise, intervene immediately. You don’t want to let a misunderstanding or hurt feelings go for any longer than necessary, and have it negatively affect club membership or activities.

Conflict resolution should be incorporated as part of the club’s norms (ground rules). Utilize your on-campus conflict resolution program. Invite the students to share openly in a respectful way what is bothering them. The ultimate goal is to communicate and resolve the issue, so that both students can go back to focusing on their club’s mission on campus.

## Sustaining NAMI On Campus Over Time

How the NOC Club will look next year and the year after will be partially up to you and what steps you take now in the current year. Determining who will take the spots of the graduating seniors and growing membership numbers each year will be something that takes planning and effort. Creating a strategy for

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how the club ownership gets passed on each year should be a top priority in your first year as an Advisor.

An ultimate goal is to have the NOC Club adopted as a school board resolution. This could be part of your 3-5 year plan and you should start thinking about the steps to take to reach this goal now.

## **A few things to keep in mind as you develop your succession strategy:**

- NOC Club Policies don't allow for the membership to be heavily weighted by seniors, so that the majority of your members don't graduate in a single year. Get younger grades involved early in their high school careers so you'll have full-term members that can carry the club from Freshman or Sophomore year through their Senior years.
- Have student leaders begin to share responsibilities with non-officers towards the end of the year. For example, have a non-officer sophomore try out leading a meeting, while the current President takes notes and gives feedback. This will get interest going from non-officers to think about running for office in the upcoming election.
- Do big membership drives in Spring for the following year and then again in Fall when school first begins. (If your school follows a different schedule, adjust accordingly).
- Plan a few leadership training activities for early on in the school year, or even during the summer (if allowable by your school). Your newly elected student leaders would benefit from having some leadership training and team-building under their belts before the school year begins.

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## Your Role & Responsibility in the NOC High School Club

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### Chaperoning & Supervision of Students

NAMI requires that all Advisors of NOC High School Clubs strictly adhere to the rules on supervision of students that their individual schools have set. It is up to the Advisor and the school administration to ensure there is a clear understanding of the school rules, and that those rules are being met.

Student safety is a number one concern; any type of activity or lack of supervision that is unsafe will result in the club losing its membership status and being disbanded.

### Reporting to NAMI

Reporting club activity to NAMI is a requirement and important to overall success of the NOC Club program. We need the information from your report to ensure we are doing all we can to support you. In addition, we need the data about membership numbers and meetings to analyze and present reports on the effectiveness of the program. The official reporting forms will be available to you online. Your State NOC Club Coordinator should provide the online form to you when you start the club.

Your State NOC Club Coordinator will contact you to collect these reports periodically. Your club sign-in sheets, agendas, and meeting notes will help you to complete these reports.

### Resources

Below is a collection of useful resources for Advisors of the NOC Club. Take a look and let us know if you have additional helpful links to add.

#### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

- The largest grassroots mental health organization's website, with facts sheets, resources and more.

#### After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools

<http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf>

- Assists schools in the aftermath of a suicide in a school community.

#### Academic Accommodations for Students with Psychiatric Disabilities

[http://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Academic\\_Accom\\_Psych.pdf](http://www.washington.edu/doit/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Academic_Accom_Psych.pdf)

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- Describes the most common mental health conditions, the challenges students living with mental health conditions face and the accommodations that can be made for these students.

## Half of Us

<http://www.halfofus.com/>

- Half of Us, mtvU and **The Jed Foundation** want to initiate a public dialogue to raise awareness about the prevalence of mental health issues and connect students to the appropriate resources to get help. The Half of Us website provides videos of young people and celebrities discussing their journeys to recovery from a mental illness and provides information on mental health conditions in young adults.

## StrengthOfUs.org

<http://strengthofus.org>

- StrengthofUs is an online community developed by NAMI and young adults. It's designed to inspire young adults impacted by mental health issues to think positive, stay strong and achieve their goals through peer support and resource sharing.

## To Write Love on Her Arms

<http://twloha.com/>

- A musical movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for young adults struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury and suicide.

## Love is Louder

<http://www.loveislouder.com/>

- Individuals, communities, schools and organizations have embraced Love is Louder as a way to address issues like bullying, negative self-image, discrimination, loneliness and depression.

## ReachOut.com

<http://us.reachout.com/>

- ReachOut.com is a safe place for teens and young adults to improve their understanding of mental health issues, develop resilience, build their coping-skills and increase help-seeking behavior. It provides evidence-based information and supports, real life stories and the ability to connect and contribute in a safe and supported community.

## Supporting Children's Mental Health

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/mentalhealth/mhtips.aspx>

Tips for teachers and educators on how to create a positive and emotionally safe environment for students

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Tips for Teachers, Principals and School Support Staff from Students with Mental Health and Behavioral Disabilities

<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c148.pdf>

- Advice to teachers and school staff from students with mental health conditions.

Taking it Global

<http://www.tigweb.org/about/>

- Encouraging today's youth to make a global impact on inclusivity, sustainability and peace.



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## Talking with Administration & Parents About the NOC High School Club

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In your role as Advisor, you will undoubtedly have conversations or meetings with parents of students in the club and your school administration. We have prepared the following talking points for each audience to help you prepare.

### For Talking with Parents

When talking with parents, keep the following in mind:

- Focus on the skills and new knowledge their child will gain as a result of the club.
- Touch on the role their child plays in the club; is their child a leader? A great source of support to other students? A fantastic coordinator of events? Share what makes their child an asset to the club and why he or she is so important to the group.
- Think about sharing the background on the club, and how it is being offered in other schools across the state. This may dispel any concerns that the club is not structured or widely accepted.
- Be prepared to educate the parents about the NOC Club and to provide them with general information on mental health and wellness. It would be excellent to have statistics about teens and mental health handy so you can prove the case for the NOC Club.
- Know your school's policies and rules inside and out. You wouldn't want to get back to a parent about a policy about which you should already be aware.
- Think about the culture of the parent and how that may affect his or her view on mental health.

### For Talking with Administration

- Do your homework. Know all that you can about the club, membership, activities and school policies.
- Be familiar with statistics about mental health and wellness in youth and the relationship between student well-being and academic success and safety.
- Be ready to discuss how successful the club has been so far; this means knowing your club meeting attendance, your officers' names, the activities that have occurred and what the outcomes have been.
- Have a game plan for what your club's impact on campus will be. How will the club accomplish the goals it has set? Administration will want to see that there is a clear plan for implementation.
- Be prepared to discuss the importance of having a mental health awareness campaign on your campus. An Administrator might not have the details and knowledge that you do. Have the statistics regarding mental illness and stigma handy.

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- Bring local NAMI Affiliate materials to your meeting with your administrator or see if a representative from your local NAMI Affiliate could attend the meeting with you. Having NAMI involved with the club will show credibility and demonstrate that there is national support for this kind of program.

## Troubleshooting

### Common Questions and Concerns

You might encounter some resistance or questions about the NOC Club. We've gathered some of the most common questions and provided thoughtful, respectful responses here to help you.

*"I don't want my son/daughter hanging out with kids who are mentally ill. They're dangerous/a bad influence."*

The NOC Club is not for students who have a mental illness. The club is to raise awareness that mental illness exists, is common and can affect daily functioning. A primary goal of this club is to reduce the stigma and discrimination related to mental illness on campus. By not allowing your child to join, this stigma is only reinforced. There are lots of different people involved in NAMI On Campus: students who are interested in a career in the medical field, friends of students with mental health conditions who want to learn more ways to be supportive; students who have family members with mental illness who are looking for a place to be accepted...the list goes on. NOC Clubs are like any other club. They offer students with a common interest and a common goal the opportunity to meet with like-minded peers.

*"It seems like this kind of club might rile students up."*

That's great! It's good for people to find something they are passionate about at such a young age. Students in the NOC Clubs will be learning and discussing topics they may never have talked about openly, which could definitely stir up emotions, both positive and negative. The Advisors are all trained on how to handle these situations and it's a requirement of any NOC Club that they have access to a mental health professional to help if needed. Overall, the NOC Club topics will be handled respectfully and with careful oversight from Advisors.

*"I'm worried students might hear something in the club and decide they have a mental illness."*

NOC Clubs are NOT therapy groups, and the Advisors are NOT diagnosticians. Students will not be asked to disclose their own experiences with mental illness or discuss their diagnoses. If a student learns about symptoms of a mental illness, and they sound familiar to him or her, that's actually a positive result of the club. That would allow the student to get help and resources earlier, rather than later. Students should still be taken to the appropriate medical and/or psychiatric services by their parents to confirm the student's symptoms and come up with a treatment plan.

## Contact Us

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If you ever need additional resources than what's listed here or are looking for extra support, please give us a call. Your role in the NOC Club is essential and we firmly believe in your power to be a mental health superstar to the students you work with! We hope you find the experience of working with students on NOC rewarding, educational and inspiring.

## Contact Info

For questions or support, please contact your local NAMI Affiliate, NSO, or NAMI National.

Team NAMI

[namioncampus@nami.org](mailto:namioncampus@nami.org)

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