

Let Your Creativity Shine: Planning Your School Event

Whether you are planning a small activity or a campus- wide event, having a plan will ensure success. This resource gets your NAMI on Campus club started on planning a successful event!

Start your plan by deciding the:

- Size
- Purpose
- Audience
- Location
- Event promotion
- Funding

Size

Smaller Low-Cost Events

Helpful Hint: Your first event of the semester should be participating in schoolwide activities or involvement fair. It's a perfect place to get students to sign the #IAmStigmafree pledge!

Pass out brochures or flyers at your events. It's a colorful way to provide students with more information about mental health and your club. Find brochure templates on the NAMI on Campus extranet.

- **Organize a scavenger hunt** – have participants find your campus' student services building or counseling center.
- **Make cards with positive messages** on them and hand them out with candy outside the guidance counselor's office.
- Encourage positive body image, stress reduction, or self-care by **writing tips on post-its notes** to put on bathroom mirrors.
- **Host a board game or trivia event after school** – make it a potluck and ask everyone to bring a snack to share.
- **Host a movie night** with a film that addresses mental health, followed by a discussion of the subject matter.

- **Host a book club event** with a book that addresses mental health. Ask participants to read the book beforehand then bring a series of talking points to the event to help lead the discussion.
- **Host arts and crafts event** after school or on the weekend; make cards that you can donate to a local hospital; make bracelets or necklaces with lettered beads that spell out inspiring words such as “calm,” “peace,” “love,” “gratitude; make t-shirts or tote bags decorated with inspiring words or phrases using stencils and fabric sharpies, fabric paint or spray paint.
- **Tie dye t-shirts or make friendship bracelets** using mental health awareness colors.
- **Start a community discussion** that combats stigma over social media.
- **Host an ice cream social** in the spring and a hot chocolate and s’mores social in the fall.
- **Create a flier with a QR code for students to share answers to questions** on mental health (i.e. What positive coping skills do you rely on to maintain your mental health?).
- **Create a “take what you need” bulletin board** with post-it notes written with words such as “peace of mind,” “patience,” “self-love,” “kindness,” etc.
- **Create a “gratitude wall”** in the hallway with post-it notes and markers for students to share what they’re grateful for and to inspire others.
- **Create a Facebook group or Instagram Page** where students can share the mental health challenges they have faced – provide information on campus resources and support groups.
- **Host a candlelight vigil** to honor students who have lost their lives to suicide and talk about suicide prevention.
- **Invite a [NAMI In Our Own Voice](#) speaker to present** on at your school.
- **Request your local NAMI affiliate** come to your school to give an Ending the Silence presentation.
- **Promote the [Stigmafree campaign](#)** and encourage students to take the #IamStigmaFree pledge.
- Pass out fliers and other written materials campus club fairs and other tabling opportunities. It’s a colorful way to provide students with more information about mental health and your club. Find brochure templates on the NAMI on Campus extranet.
- And so much more! Let your creativity shine!



Heritage High School NAMI On Campus High School Club a "Positive Chalk Art" event where students came out to draw positive affirmations and images to spread positivity to their peers. They also included FREE donuts to help incentivize students to participate. According to their Instagram page, there were many art pieces completed! Instagram can be a great way to connect with other people from your school, especially when you tag other accounts that your school hosts such as Associated Students, Residential Life, official school pages, or other involved organizations on and off campus.

Large & Collaborative Events

- **De-Stress Event:** Connect with campus health groups to host a fun event during midterms or finals. Bring in therapy animals, host a guided meditation, rent an inflatable game. Invite local businesses to hand out healthy snacks and ask the school counseling department to come share their resources with students.
- **Move for Mental Health Events:** Have an outdoor yoga or dance class, or host a field day. Invite local businesses to hand out healthy snacks and ask the counseling center to come share their resources with students.
- **Concert, Talent Show, Open-Mic Night:** Plan an event with your music and performing arts school or student performance clubs. Check out your school's policies and work with your NAMI state and/or local affiliate to turn the event into a fundraiser.
- **Student Mental Health Panel:** Host a panel of students sharing their mental health journeys. Partner with other organizations that have a social justice or wellness focus: LGBTQ+ groups, sexual assault awareness groups, veterans groups, cultural groups, disability awareness groups, peer health educator groups and more.
- **NAMI Walk:** Create a team and participate in a local NAMI Walk. Invite students from other clubs to join your team and set a goal for student participation. This gives your club the opportunity to connect with other school groups and NAMI in your community. Go to www.nami.org/walk for info on a walk near you.

Spotlight on Success

University of Maryland, Baltimore County Winter Wonderland Event

- Decorated the union with winter images and positive mental health messages
- Had university staff talk about the mental health resources available on campus
- Invited students to decorate gingerbread houses
- Provided pizza for the 100+ attendees

University of Nebraska, Omaha

- Contacted the Omaha World-Herald to run a story on the only NAMI on Campus club in the state

- The story was picked up by the North Platte Telegraph and mentioned in the Huffington Post

Florida State University

- “Alive! Mental Health Fair”
 - Raised awareness about mental health and suicide prevention
 - Provided information about campus resources to 2000+ attendees
- Race Against Stigma 5K Run
 - Raised hundreds of dollars to fund future events

Purpose, Audience & Location

Decide on the activity’s purpose, target audience and location.

Purpose: What is your club’s main reason for hosting the event? Is it to:

- Recruit new members?
- Raise mental health awareness?
- Support students?
- Promote mental health services?

Stay focused on your goal throughout the planning process to ensure your activity is successful.

Audience and Location: Tailor the activity to the kind of audience and location of the event.

- Make the event relevant – focus on things happening locally or in current events and target specific communities like LGBTQ or cultural organizations.
- Make the event prominent – host events in common spaces on campus and promote it wherever you can.

Event Promotion

Helpful Hint: Check with your school for rules on handing out fliers or hanging them up. Look into restrictions for writing in chalk on sidewalks to promote events

Social Media



At School

- Make a Facebook event page and invite everyone on your friends list.

- Come up with a creative hashtag and use it to post about the event.
- Create graphics and videos leading up to the event and at the event and post them on Instagram and Facebook.
- Make fun TikTok videos to share videos about your event.
- Make bold flyers to hang around your school – print in black and white on colorful paper.
- Write an op-ed series in your school's newspaper and send email announcements to campus listervs.
- Ask your school advisor permission to use chalk to write about the event on your school's sidewalks – draw some eye-catching pictures and show your artistic talents.
- Make a cutout with your social media information and hold a photo booth – have your attendees promote your event for you!

Examples

UN-Omaha made an Instagram selfie cutout and had it at a tabling event

Miami-Dade North stands at their awareness and bake sale table – food always catches people's attention!

Florida State University took advantage of high-traffic areas on campus to spread messages of mental health awareness.

Funding

- Working with other student organizations can increase the amount of funding you receive from the university – you're working with two budgets instead of one.
- Reach out to Greek Life if your campus has it – you can get funding or volunteers and they can get philanthropy and volunteer hours, a win-win!
- Reach out to the NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate in your area to get involved with one of their events, like a NAMImark or a health fair. Use your partnership with them to help your club grow!

Donations / Sponsorships

Getting donations from students and sponsorships from businesses or school departments can help you gather everything you need for the event.

- Get in touch with your NSO/NA contacts to discuss donor relationships and opportunities before you start to fundraise or research grants
- When you collaborate with other clubs and schools departments, and local businesses, discuss what financial support or in-kind supplies they can offer.
- Acknowledge donors and sponsors at the event. Offer their name on the banner or t-shirt or a table to promote their organization at the event as an incentive.

Helpful Hint: Display a donation box at your club's events if your school allows it. Label it with a catchy sign – like "Change for Change" – to get people's attention. Pocket change adds up!

Grants and Other Campus Resources

Check to see what grant funding your NAMI on

Campus club is eligible to receive.

- Your student government, alumni network or academic departments may provide grants to campus club projects.
- Check out charitable foundations –like The Pepsi Foundation – that regularly award grants to student group applicants.

Reminders

- Invite mental health counselors, disability coordinators, counselors and school administrators to your events. This increases your visibility and credibility and gives students a low-stress environment to learn more about available resources.
 - Plan events during national awareness weeks or days.
 - Mental Illness Awareness Week is the first week of October.
 - Suicide Prevention Month is in September.
 - National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is the last week of February.
 - National Mental Health Awareness Month is in May.

There are many more. Many have their own color schemes for the week/month, so use that to grab people's attention.

- Bring information about your club's meetings, a signup sheet to be added to mailing lists, mental health brochures, fact sheets and more to all of your events.

Additional Resources

- Meet with the NAMI State Organization and/or NAMI Affiliate in your community for advice and support.
- Explore the NAMI on Campus Leaders [Extranet](#). If you do not have access, contact your NAMI state organization and/or local affiliate contact for information on how to gain access
- Email us at namioncampus@nami.org to share success stories, best practices, fact sheets, pictures and more! Your success will help encourage other clubs to greatness too!
- [Become a NAMI member](#) to receive regular updates, information and resources on mental health conditions, advocacy, upcoming events, opportunities, new research and much more!