



October 7, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Family and Peer Support Helpline Contract Awarded to NAMI San Diego

SAN DIEGO—Thanks to being awarded a contract from San Diego County Behavioral Health, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI San Diego) is now expanding and improving their Helpline.

NAMI San Diego is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services and advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses. For more than two decades, NAMI San Diego has hosted a County-wide helpline to assist family members and individuals with lived mental health experience with questions about NAMI San Diego, mental health services and/or to simply be a listening ear. They have logged approximately 200 calls per month. Now, with this new county contract, the line can be enhanced and expanded to help even more people who need it.

“We're very excited about the new Family and Peer Support Helpline,” said NAMI San Diego’s Executive Director Shannon Jaccard. “This new Helpline contract will allow us to increase our outreach to the community and assist more individuals and families on their road to mental health recovery.”

The Family and Peer Support Helpline Program Manager, Brandi Marcoe, received her Master's Degree in Social Work from San Diego State University and has worked for NAMI San Diego in the past. A native San Diegan, Marcoe is a family member and peer who knows how difficult it can be to access the various community resources. “It can be overwhelming trying to navigate the mental health system alone. The NAMI San Diego Family and Peer Support Helpline can provide guidance, referrals, information and an empathetic ear to help aid in the recovery process,” she said.

Some of the information available from the Helpline includes referrals, support groups, questions regarding SSI, housing, case management, payee, conservatorship, and community resources. “Basically anything having to do with any and all aspects revolving around mental health,” Marcoe added. “Some people simply call us with a problem or situation they don't know how to solve, but after talking with a Family or Peer Helpline Specialist, they hang up with several resources we hope will improve their quality of life.”

The Family and Peer Support Helpline Specialists have over 100 years of combined experience in the mental health system. One of the main ideas behind the expansion of the line is prevention and early intervention with mental health services. If people can get help early on, the rate of recovery is often much higher. Education about resources and services for those with mental illness and their family members is a key contributor to that success rate, which is what the helpline strives to achieve.

The Helpline also collaborates with the Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) to provide outreach into the Asian/Pacific Islander (API) communities. NAMI San Diego selected UPAC as a partner in this venture because UPAC is a multi-social service agency that has been dedicated to serving San Diego County's API, Latino and other ethnic groups for more than 32 years. UPAC began as a small grassroots organization serving only six Asian and Pacific Islander communities within San Diego. Today, UPAC is a non-profit organization that has over 120 bilingual and bi-cultural employees who possess the skills to speak approximately 30 languages and dialects.

The NAMI San Diego Family and Peer Support Helpline hours are Mondays, Wednesdays through Fridays from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm and Tuesdays from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Over-the-phone translation services are available in 170 different languages for callers. The Family and Peer Support Helpline is not a crisis hotline, however, callers in crisis can be connected to the Access and Crisis Line in San Diego should they need that assistance.

For more information, contact the NAMI San Diego Family and Peer Support Helpline at (619) 543-1434 or (800) 523-5933. Or visit www.namisandiego.org

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