



National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami | New York State

2013 Legislative Action Agenda Mental Health Education in Schools

Education, early intervention and working on prevention are keys to minimizing and hopefully, eventually eradicating mental illnesses.

It is vital that New York's education system does a better job of creating a true comprehension of mental illness and mental health issues. Proper mental health is crucial to overall wellbeing, which is why it is necessary that mental health is incorporated into health education curriculums. Administrators, teachers and students must be given the tools to identify the potential warning signs of mental illnesses which are prevalent in children and adolescents, as well demonstrate the harmful and potential long-term mental health effects of bullying.

The integration of mental health into our educational curriculums is long overdue. Including mental health education will lead to our children getting the proper support they need; this will also lead to a reduction in harassment and bullying which can contribute to an already high suicide rate in adolescents.

- 10% of American youth suffer from serious mental health conditions
- 50% of mental illnesses develop by age 14, 75% by age 24
- 70-80% of children living with mental illness do not receive needed treatment. This leads to decreased performance in schools
- 2.2 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 have experienced a major depressive episode in the past year, and nearly 60% of them did not receive any treatment
- The dropout rate for children with severe emotional health and mental health issues is twice that of other students
- Expanded school mental health services in elementary schools have been found to reduce special education referrals, improve aspects of the school climate and produce declines in disciplinary referrals, suspension and grade retention

NAMI-NYS has partnered with three other organizations, the Mental Health Association in New York State, Families Together in New York State, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to promote legislation that would formally introduce mental health education into our state's health education curriculum. This important step would significantly raise awareness of mental health issues.

NAMI-NYS urges New York to incorporate mental health education in our schools.