

LIAISON REPORT – October, 2017

AGENCY: NAMI of Central Iowa

LIAISONS: Matt Soderstrum and Carmen Frederick

“NAMI CI supports people affected by mental illnesses, educates the public about mental health issues, and advocates for people affected by mental illnesses.” <http://www.namici.org/>

1. Need for Program. *Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.*

There is a continuing and large need for the services provided by NAMI

1. Direct support to those living with mental illness.
 - a. Service is through the Wellness Center, approximately 7-10 people in attendance each day. Open M-F 1-4pm. This provides a solid base of community, support and activity for people living with mental illness in our community. A total of 83 individuals were impacted by the Wellness Center in 2017.
 - b. Connections group, a peer-support group, approximately 13 people regularly attend. This group meets every Thursday.
 - c. Peer-to-Peer Class – this is a ten-week class that is offered twice a year
2. Support to families who have a family member living with mental illness.
 - a. Regular family-to-family course that lasts several weeks. A plan is to have a regular course in each county in the new mental health district. The challenge is to find people who live in each county to volunteer to be trained.
 - b. Family Support group that meets once per month. Typically about 10-12 attend. A group also meets in Hardin and Jasper Counties.
 - c. Small loans can be taken out by those with a onetime financial need. The amounts and the uses of these loan monies fluctuate from year to year.
3. Advocacy and public education on mental illness.
 - a. Monthly education event. Attendance ranges from 20-80 depending on topic. This typically meets at the Ames Public Library.
 - b. NAMI Central Iowa brings mental health concerns to the attention of local, state, and federal legislators and supports legislation that promotes the welfare of those living with mental illness.
 - c. Director speaks at public events
 - d. Director works with local law-enforcement agencies
4. NAMI On Campus was started in 2016. Currently they have a monthly meeting and are a recognized club at Iowa State. They are also connected to other NAMI campus groups to share ideas and network. The purpose is to address mental health issues on Iowa State’s campus by:
 - a. Raising mental health awareness
 - b. Educating the campus community
 - c. Promoting services and support
 - d. Advocating for mental health issues

Funder priorities

- 1) United Way: Health. Essential services for healthy lives are affordable and accessible.
- 2) ISU Student Government: Services that provide prevention and treatment for mental health, both group and individual care.

- 3) Story County: Safety, health and well-being; Accessible medical services; Prevention and early intervention services
- 4) City of Ames: Meet mental health and chemical dependency needs
- 5) Central Iowa Community Services (Mental Health/Disability Service): Treatment designed to improve a person's condition and Recovery services.

2. Program Strengths. *Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.*

- Wellness Center provides strong support for individuals to strengthen their mental health. People who attend rely on the Wellness Center.
- NAMI has a strong reputation throughout the country. It is well established with state and national support. Programs and training are tried and tested.
- Education and support groups provide critical community support for families who are often isolated while caring for a family member with mental illness. The Family to Family program is going well with a waiting list of those who desire to attend future classes.
- The organization has accomplished a lot at the Center and throughout the region with a very limited staff – of which only one is full-time.

3. Program Weaknesses. *Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.*

Challenges

- Continuing to make people aware of the Center is a challenge. Optimae has closed their wellness center and NAMI is currently trying to make Optimae's clients aware of the NAMI Wellness Center option.
- NAMI of Central Iowa has limited staff and their executive director can get spread pretty thin. Currently there are no benefits paid to this position, which is not a suitable long-term solution. Additional staff could be helpful as well.

Areas of opportunity/growth

- Continue to increase services to ISU students. NAMI on Campus is very active and are doing great things. They hope to impact more people affected by mental health issues.
- Expand much needed children's mental health services to the Middle and High schools when the ISU peer groups are established so they can help in supporting brothers/sisters impacted at this age level. Providing a support group for parents of children with mental health issues could be helpful.
- While the liaisons recognize that helping people regularly take their medicine is a complex issue, we encourage the agencies in Story County to explore possible solutions. We understand that many of the contacts with Police are reported to be connected to clients not taking their prescribed medicine.

4. Financial Outlook. *Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.*

NAMI Central Iowa is very dependent on ASSET for funding. NAMI does seek small grants and outside funding as needed, but this is somewhat limited. They receive a significant amount of donations, but these donations are very unpredictable. It is important for them to have a dependable source of income.

5. Internal Management Practices. Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

Board meets regularly and is highly engaged and active. A strategic plan is designed and implemented by the Board every two years. The Board is active in fundraising and in community outreach.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments. Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

Lisa Heddens has been the Executive Director since August 8th of 2016. She has experience with the Asset process and is comfortable with it.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

1. NAMI plays a steady and consistent role for individuals and families struggling with mental health issues.
2. NAMI Central Iowa has a dedicated group of staff and volunteers and a very engaged Board.
3. NAMI Central Iowa seems to be effectively using the resources entrusted to them.