Officer Elections 1

Medi-Cal Changes 2

NAMICon 2022 2

General Meeting 2

AOT 3

Community Survey 3

NAMI Santa Clara County

March 2022

NAMI NEWS

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Feb. 8 General Meeting Summary

House of Healing Conversation Dives Deeper into De-stigmatizing Mental Illness

By Moryt Milo

Sixteen years ago, Beth Am, a synagogue in Los Altos Hills, pioneered a mental health support group after one of its leaders, Jane Marcus, told her story about suffering from debilitating depression.

Her admission shocked the congregation. On the surface, Marcus had a successful career. She had earned a Ph.D. and was a loving mother of two children. How could she have severe depression? Her courage was an awakening for others who realized they were not alone.

That day seeded Beit R'fuah (House of Healing), a mental health ministry with a faith-based support group. Over the years, word spread about this safe, confidential, loving space where no one judged. Where stigma didn't exist. Where sharing a personal story gave hope to an individual or family member in need of comfort or in the throes of a mental health crisis. People of all faiths and ethnicities would find their way through the welcoming doors.

Beit R'fuah decided to extend its reach and produced a documentary, released in 2021, to illustrate how faith-based mental health support groups can make a difference.

Carol Irwin, one of Beit R'fuah's founders, helped produce the film, which was screened at the Feb. 8, 2022 NAMI-Santa Clara County General Meeting.

After the showing, five panelists dove deeper into the subject of de-stigmatizing mental illness through mental health-friendly congregations. The purpose was to show how the Beit R'fuah template could be applied to any faith-based community. The panelists included Bruce Feldstein, Barbara Zahner, Sharon Roth, Tony Sehgal, and Carol Irwin.

The discussion explored ways clergy can work with families and individuals struggling with mental health problems. On the flipside, the group talked about the importance of helping clergy and faith leaders address their own mental health. The panelists talked about the importance of changing the way people with mental illness are perceived. The need to educate others and teach them to stop identifying individuals as the illness, and how to reframe the sentence as a person *with* an illness. The group reiterated that education was paramount in shattering taboos that surrounded mental health.

Zahner, a retired chaplain and founding board member of the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministries, described mental health support groups in faith-based communities as "a sacred container to hold that story." Through her own experience of losing people who died by suicide, Zahner saw how a church support group offered people a sacred place to share. She described House of Healing as "a sacred container" and added, "House of Healing is a beautiful model for families to have that place to talk to one another, and [knowing] you are not alone is vital."

To read the full story, ***click here****.*

To watch the Beit R'fuah (House of Healing) documentary and panel discussion, ***click here****.*

Board of Directors Election of Officers 2022-2023

Here is our slate of nominees for 2022-2023:

President: **Uday Kapoor**

VPs: **Beverly Lozoff, Harold Brown, Juan Perez, Frank Alioto**

Treasurer: **Steve Wade**

Secretary: **Peter Newman**

The slate of candidates will be voted on at the March general meeting and the installation of officers will take place in April. In addition, our Board has three members-at-large positions and we are looking to fill one of them. If you would like to learn more about this position, please contact **Beverly** at **blozoff@namisantaclara.org**

Changes to Medi-Cal Eligibility Rules—and They're Good!

By Ellen Cookman, JD, LL.M

Good news in relation to public benefits and the disabled feels like a rarity nowadays. Happily, I am here to buck that trend and share wonderful news with you! Medi-Cal, California's version of the federal Medicaid system that provides health insurance to the elderly and disabled with low resources, is changing.

As of this writing, if you are disabled, you need to have under $2,000 of "countable assets" to qualify for Medi-Cal. This is essentially money in the bank — savings and checking accounts, brokerage accounts, CDs, cash value for life insurance policies, etc. There are a few "exempt" assets (one house, one car, a burial plot, retirement accounts where the beneficiary is taking required minimum distributions), but essentially, you're required to be poor.

But soon this will be different!

California Assembly Bill 133 was approved by Governor Newsom on July 27, 2021. AB 133 provides that, as of July 1, 2022, the asset limit for a Medi-Cal beneficiary *will increase from $2,000 to $130,000*! And the asset limit is further increased by $65,000 for each additional household member.

For example, if a couple receives Medi-Cal and has a dependent son living at home, their asset limit will be $260,000 ($130,000 + $65,000 + $65,000).

And, as of January 1, 2024, there will be no asset limits at all!

What doesn't change?

1. Medi-Cal still looks at your income level, and you may need to pay a share of cost (SOC) based on your income;
2. Medi-Cal's estate recovery rules remain the same;
3. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) still has an asset limit of $2,000.

Also, please note that these changes are *only* taking place in California. If you live in any other state, the federal Medicaid asset limit of $2,000 for a single person still applies, though I'm hopeful that California's steps will influence other states in future years.

How will this change planning steps?

We often set up a 1st party Special Needs Trust to hold an inheritance of just about any size received by a person receiving Medi-Cal benefits. However, on or after July 1, 2022, if you receive an inheritance of about $130,000, you probably won't need a 1st party Special Needs Trust, since Medi-Cal won't "count" those assets against your eligibility. Instead, you will likely set up a revocable living trust to avoid probate and also avoid a Medi-Cal reimbursement claim at your death.

Furthermore, on or after January 1, 2024, you can probably rely on a revocable living trust for an inheritance of just about any size, as opposed to a 1st party Special Needs Trust.

Keep in mind that if you receive SSI benefits, you will still need a 1st party Special Needs Trust to protect those benefits.

NAMI National Convention (NAMICon): June 14-16

Registration is now open for NAMICon 2022. NAMI National's annual convention will take place **virtually** again this year.

As one of the largest community gatherings of mental health advocates in the U.S., NAMICon provides an incredible opportunity to bring awareness, resources and solutions to a wider audience of people affected by mental health conditions — both nationally and globally.

The pandemic and global events of the past two years have had a profound effect on everyone's mental health — individuals, youth, families, communities of color, and frontline professionals. It's more important than ever for us to join **Together for Mental Health**, a timely and appropriate theme for the 2022 convention.

For more information about the convention and registration, go to **www.nami.org/convention**

March 8 General Meeting

How Different Types of Stressful Experiences Affect Brain Development and Mental Health in Teens

Dr. Rajpreet Chahal is interested in understanding the roles of specific forms of stress (for example, abuse and economic disadvantage) on brain development and mental health. In her research study, she describes how the brain develops when faced with different types of stressful experiences and how these experiences affect mental health during the teenage years. She also studies protective factors, including positive family and peer relationships, that might help to build resilience and reduce the effects of stress on the brain and mood.

Understanding how specific aspects of the environment shape individuals' biology and mood is an important step forward in developing person-centered interventions that combat depression and other forms of mental health difficulties.

Dr. Chahal is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychology at Stanford University. She earned her Ph.D. at University of California, Davis and is currently funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and the Klingenstein Third Generation Foundation Fellowship in Depression.

NOTE: Past General Meeting presentations can be viewed by going to our website, **www.namisantaclara.org**, under News & Events and clicking "General Meetings."

Thank You, Supporters

NAMI-Santa Clara County is always so amazed at the generosity of our many supporters. You are awesome!

During the months of December, January, and February, we received the following grant and donations.

- Grant: El Camino Healthcare District: $50,000 for Community Peer Program (CPP)
- Donations: The list is too long to include here, but we want to take this opportunity to thank all those who so generously supported us at the end of the year through our end-of-year letter and our holiday drive.

Grants and donations allow us to continue providing a wide range of programs to the community at no cost.

If you know of any foundations or organizations that might be interested in funding our programs, please email our Executive Director, **Rovina Nimbalkar**, at **rnimbalkar@namisantaclara. org**

Charitable Giving

Please consider including NAMI-Santa Clara County in your charitable giving.

We don't endorse specific companies as most of the large financial brokerages now have a not-for-profit subsidiary with extensive resources to help you plan and execute your plan. Here's an example: **Welcome to the Schwab Charitable Giving Guide Schwab Charitable Donor-Advised Fund | Schwab Charitable**.

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Is Now Live in Santa Clara County

"Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) delivers community-based behavioral health services under court order to individuals with severe mental illness who have demonstrated difficulty adhering to treatment on a voluntary basis and have difficulty living safely in the community without close monitoring."

Who to contact if you think someone needs assistance through AOT?

AOT went live in Santa Clara County on **February 16, 2022**. Here are ways to get help:

- Call the Behavioral Health Call Center: **800-704-0900, option 7** to speak with an AOT team member, or
- Contact **AOT@hhs.sccgov.org**

What happens after the AOT request is made?

- Intensive community-based outreach
- Intensive efforts to engage the individual in voluntary treatment
- Mental health assessment to determine if AOT criteria are met
- Court petition process, if needed
- Intensive community-based behavioral health services, voluntary or mandated, as appropriate.

What services will be provided in the AOT program?

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT):

- Intensive clinical services
- Peer support
- Intensive case management
- Housing assistance
- 24/7 clinical crisis support
- Medication evaluation

For more information about AOT in Santa Clara County, go to **www.bhsd.sccgov.org/home**

Mental Health and Substance Use Community Survey

A questionnaire has been created for individuals who live in Santa Clara County, have utilized mental health or substance use services, or have feedback on what services are needed in Santa Clara County, especially after COVID-19. Your input will play a key role in creating improved and new mental health and substance use resources and supports in our community. The survey is sponsored by the Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD).

This questionnaire takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential and anonymous, and your participation in the project is completely voluntary. Be sure to read the questions carefully.

Thank you for your collaboration and input! For any questions, contact **669-900-2137**, **MHSA@hhs.sccgov.org**, or **www.myvoiceourchange.org**

Here is the link to the survey: **https://bhsd.sccgov.org/about-us/mental-health-services-act/mhsa-survey-english**

Research Study: Caregivers & Technology

A research team from the University of Washington is studying the use of technology to help people with mental illnesses and their caregivers. They are looking for caregivers of young people (age 15-35) with psychosis who are interested in providing input into the design of a caregiver-facing mobile mental health (mHealth) platform. Participants will be interviewed about their experiences and challenges as caregivers and what resources could better support them and their loved ones. Participants will also interact with an existing mHealth prototype and help identify strengths and weaknesses of the design. All information collected for this study will be kept secure and confidential.

Total participation time is 60-90 minutes. Participants will receive a $75 Amazon gift card for their time.

Who can participate? Participants may be eligible for this study if they

- are age 18 and older and a caregiver to a young person (age 15-35) with early psychosis;
- live in the United States;
- own a smartphone.

Participants' loved ones must be either

- currently engaged in a specialty psychosis treatment program; or
- not currently engaged in specialty treatment, and not received specialty treatment for at least 3 months.

There will be about 20 people participating in this study.

Where is the study taking place? The study will be conducted virtually.

How do I learn more? If you have questions or would like more information, please refer to **www.bolsterproject.org**, contact the researchers at **bolster@uw.edu,** or call **Mary** at **206-474-7794.**

Openings on Behavioral Health Board (BHB)

Currently, there are openings on the County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Board and we encourage NAMI members, family members, and clients to apply. It is a rare opportunity to have your say!

The Behavioral Health Board is comprised of 16 members of the community at large, clients, and family members of clients of the behavioral health system. The Board's duties include reviewing and evaluating the community's behavioral health needs, facilities, and special problems, as well as advising the Board of Supervisors and the County Behavioral Health Director.

To learn more about the Behavioral Health Board and to apply, go to **bhsd.sccgov.org/information-resources/behavioral-health-board**

MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM

Join, renew, and/or donate to NAMI-SCC

I would like to join:

- ☐ Individual ($40)
- ☐ Household ($60)
- ☐ Open Door ($5)
- ☐ New Membership
- ☐ Renewal Membership

I would like to donate:

- ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $100 ☐ $250
- Other _____
- ☐ In Honor of: ☐ In Memory of _____
- Amount Enclosed: $_____

☐ My company has a Matching Gift Program _____

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/ State_____ Zip Code_____

Phone: (___)_____Email:_____

To pay online, go to **www.namisantaclara.org** and click on "Join NAMI."
Learn how to include NAMI-SCC in your estate plan by going to "Get Involved/ Planned Giving" on our website.

NAMI-SCC welcomes your membership. Memberships are valid for one year. Part of the membership dues enrolls you at NAMI State and NAMI National, which in turn automatically registers you as a member at all levels. Your additional donation helps ensure that we are able to maintain our office, as well as our educational programs. Your membership and donations are tax deductible. **Tax ID #94-2430956**

NAMI-Santa Clara County Community Resource & Support Center
1150 S Bascom Av #24
San Jose, CA 95128
Phone: 408-453-0400
Fax: 408-453-2100
www.namisantaclara.org
office@namisantaclara.org

Office Hours: 10 A.M.-6 P.M. M-F
To reach our Warmline, call **408-453-0400 Option 1**; after hours, press **Option 4**.

Board of Directors
Victor Ojakian
Beverly Lozoff
Navah Statman
Juan Perez
Harold Brown
Uday Kapoor
Steven Wade
Peter Newman
Karen Deloumi
Frank Alioto
Moryt Milo

Newsletter Staff
Beverly Lozoff
Stephanie Schonian
Donna-Jo Mechanic

Follow Us On: