

**NAMI VENTURA COUNTY'S PUBLIC POLICY POSITION ON  
"CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND FORENSIC ISSUES"\***

**ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY OF MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS**

Mental health systems have ultimate responsibility for treating all people with severe mental illness. A substantial number of people with severe mental illness require twenty-four hour, seven days per week structured care, either for long or short periods of time. It is never appropriate to allow the care of such persons to be shifted to the criminal justice system.

**THERAPEUTIC JURISPRUDENCE**

NAMI endorses the principal of therapeutic jurisprudence, which emphasizes that the law should be used, whenever possible, to promote the mental and physical well being of the people it affects. For example, in a system characterized by therapeutic jurisprudence, people with serious mental illnesses charged with non-violent crimes are diverted into programs designed to address their treatment and service needs, rather than incarcerated. Individuals with serious mental illnesses convicted of serious crimes are provided with humane and appropriate linkages to needed services and supports upon discharge to enable them to successfully re-enter their communities.

**RIGHTS TO TREATMENT (REGARDLESS OF CRIMINAL STATUS)**

Humane and effective treatment for serious mental illnesses while in correctional settings is the constitutional right of inmates with serious mental illnesses. NAMI strongly urges the enactment of state statutes expanding treatment programs within prison and jail settings, including first line access to new generation medications whenever clinically indicated.

**COLLABORATION**

NAMI believes that state and local mental health authorities must work closely in conjunction with state and local correctional and law enforcement agencies to develop strategies and programs for compassionate intervention by law enforcement, jail diversion, treatment of community reintegration services for individuals with serious mental illnesses released from correctional facilities.

\*Adopted by NAMI Ventura County Board of Directors June 2020 with acknowledgment of NAMI National's official platform.

*NAMI Ventura County is a 501(c) (3) Non-Profit Organization, Tax ID Number: 77-0037450*

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