
NAMI EAST BAY NEWSLETTER

A local affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

May-June 2015

Housing Costs and Mental Illness Wednesday, May 27

The speaker at our May 27 meeting will be **Robert Ratner, MPH, MD**, who has more than fifteen years of experience working on health care services integration and housing as a health care issue. He received his public health and medical training from UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco and is currently a volunteer faculty member at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. He spent six years as the director of a supportive housing program for formerly homeless individuals at LifeLong Medical Care, a community health center based in Berkeley. He currently works at Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services as their Housing Services Director. As part of his role, Dr. Ratner helps promote models of integrated health care that include mental health, substance abuse, and primary care services.

Networking Opportunity: If housing for people with serious mental illness is of concern to you, join us at the NAMI East Bay office on **Saturday, May 16, at 10 am** for a pre-meeting to network and brainstorm, so that we will have some already digested ideas to share with Dr. Ratner and his time with us will be productive. Further, if you are interested in meeting others who would like to set up co-housing arrangements with their family members, join us or leave a message with contact information.

Speaker Meeting starts at 7:30 pm

Albany United Methodist Church
980 Stannage Avenue, Albany
Corner of Stannage and Marin

Meeting is free and open to the public.

Support Meetings

NAMI East Bay offers the following monthly support meetings:

- **Support and Share Group for Families of Adults** is held on the 2nd Wednesday of each

month. The next meetings are May 13, June 10, July 8.

- **Support and Share Group for Families of Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults** is held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month: May 19, June 16, July 21.

Support Group Meetings are held at the Albany United Methodist Church, 7-9 pm. Enter through the gates to the right of the door on Stannage Avenue, turn left through the large room, go down the hall, and come up the stairs. Signs will be posted.

All support meetings are free to NAMI members and non-members, offering a chance to talk with others who understand, give emotional support, and share ways they have found to cope.

Progress on Our Website

As this newsletter is being put together now in mid-April, there is a parallel creation also happening. NAMI East Bay has a new website, which will imminently be open for business. Check out www.namieastbay.org—if it's not up and running now, it will soon be. The access to the internal programming process promises to be less problematic than the previous incarnation. Since this was a collaborative process, with one professional who is dealing with amateur input, we hope this does the job.

Laura's Law/AB1421 Information Kit

We have been putting energy toward creating a concise and comprehensive information kit about Laura's Law, or AB1421, useful for building an impressive list of endorsers and contacting community and political leaders who should be informed about this issue. Let us know if you would like a copy of this information packet. We encourage its use in making contacts. As yet, there is no scheduled hearing date with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

SPEAKER NOTES

FERC at Five Years

Summarized by Thomas T. Thomas

The Family Education and Resource Center (FERC) is an innovative program that supports families and caregivers of people of any age with serious emotional or mental health challenges living in Alameda County. Since opening its doors in September 2009, the center has served nearly 11,000 families. At our March 25 meeting, FERC Director **Annie Kim** and Lead Family Advocate **Bettye Foster** shared what they have learned in the past five years. Their activities include advocating for the family's and caregiver's role and inclusion with providers, advising families about what they should do during a crisis, and stressing the often overlooked importance of practicing self-care. Conceived and put into being by Alameda County family groups with funds from the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63), FERC is unique in both California and the nation.

"All of our family advocates are also family members who have a person with mental health issues," Foster said. "So we've been there ... we can help."

Kim stressed that FERC helps anyone concerned about someone, including that person's parents, siblings, spouse or partner, friends and neighbors, colleagues and roommates. Family advocates often help people who live outside the county, the state, and even outside the country. Although their expertise is in Alameda County programs and services, they don't like to say they can't help and will try to put a caller in touch with local services as necessary.

Foster said that a first-time connection on the FERC "warm line" (1-888-896-3372) may run from fifteen minutes to two hours, and the first in-person meeting may take at least thirty minutes to an hour. The center has three family advocates (FAs) at its main office at the Eastmont Town Center in East Oakland, and one each at the offices in San Leandro, Fremont, and Livermore, but all the FAs rotate into the main office once a week. They are prepared to provide services and training in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Farsi. And all services are provided free of charge.

In addition to information and education topics like types of illnesses, diagnoses, and medications,

which can be useful anywhere, the center provides advocacy and support services, going with the family member to the hospital, to meetings with service providers, to hearings and court dates in the criminal justice system, and meetings with teachers and school officials. They connect clients with available and appropriate services. "And this is not just a list of phone numbers," Kim said. "Too often those put you in a dead end or voice mail for a callback that never comes. We make the 'warm connection' ahead of time with the person who can actually help." FERC also assists clients with navigating the behavioral health care system in Alameda County.

The FERC offices are busy. In February 2015 alone—"And December through February are usually our lightest months," Kim said—the center handled 93 warm-line calls, 92 walk-ins by new clients and 52 walk-ins by old clients, took 50 in-person appointments, conducted 315 phone interactions, and dealt with 112 new clients and 139 returning clients.

Over the years, FERC has expanded the role of its family advocates. New skills include helping to prepare Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with a loved one's school, connecting clients outside of Alameda County with resources, and becoming a referral for 2-1-1 and ACCESS human services calls, other service providers and clinicians, law enforcement, and schools.

Family advocates also take continuing education courses in the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and confidentiality issues, children's care, eating disorders, hoarding and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), housing options, medications, dual diagnosis, and suicide prevention, especially for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender loved ones.

The center at various times has offered support groups in English and Spanish and a group for transition-age youth (TAY) and their family members as well as groups for adults. Family advocates are certified to facilitate NAMI's Family-to-Family classes and support groups in English and Spanish, as well as the Ending the Silence program with TAY family members in high schools. They also facilitate Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) classes for family members and at high schools, as well as the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program.

FERC provides training programs for service providers, with input from local expert [Rebecca](#)

[Woolis, MFT](#); crisis intervention training for law enforcement officers and police dispatchers; and 5150¹ training for caregivers, family members, and providers. The center runs an open roundtable with TAY consumers, family members and law enforcement; a public education campaign for future mental health providers; and training in Individualized Placement & Support (IPS). The latter is important, Kim said, “because employment is empowerment.”

For all these services and programs, Dartmouth College this May will present FERC with a National Family Award.

In regard to the 5150 and police dispatcher training, Kim pointed out several things that most people don't know:

- If you call 9-1-1 on a cell phone, you are routed to the California Highway Patrol, not the nearest local police and fire services. It's best to call from a landline, and put emergency numbers for local services in your cell phone's contact list.
- When you call 9-1-1, you are actually talking to two people at once. One is the call taker, who is tasked with asking specific questions based on the type of emergency. The other is the local police dispatcher, who does not talk but enters responses into the police computer and performs triage in order to dispatch an appropriate response.
- Always allow the call taker to ask the necessary questions, as this will speed—not delay—the response time. Be prepared to answer the “5 Ws” of who, what, where, when ... and is there a weapon available to the person in crisis?
- Do not exaggerate the situation, as this will not improve your experience with police.
- If possible, try to meet the police officer outside, or away from the loved one in crisis.
- Be brief and direct in describing the situation.
- Allow the officers to assess the situation. Their priority will be to secure the scene and provide for everyone's safety.
- Be prepared with a filled out copy of the [AB 1424 Form](#), which provides historical information about your loved one's condition. “This is an excellent tool for family members,” Foster said.

¹ Section of the California Welfare and Institutions Code that authorizes a qualified officer or clinician to involuntarily confine a person suspected of having a mental disorder that makes him or her a danger to self or others and/or gravely disabled.

Alameda County also offers two types of mobile mental health support:

- **Mobile Crisis Team** is for when the situation is urgent but not suitable for an emergency room visit. It provides two clinicians who have police radios, wear plain clothing, and drive a county vehicle. This service is available Monday to Friday, 10:30 am to 8 pm, at 510-383-5020. A similar service is available in Berkeley at 510-981-5244.
- **Mobile Evaluation Team** is a new program on a trial basis, pairing a police officer with a clinician, for when the situation is an emergency and safety is compromised. The pair travel in an unmarked Oakland Police Department vehicle. The service is available Monday to Thursday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, by calling 9-1-1 in Oakland (the Oakland Police Department's dispatch number).

“Ideally,” Kim said, “a loved one should get voluntary support before a crisis erupts and the police are called, because ambulance and hospital services are expensive.” The FERC team is following programs that offer peer support, such as [Second Story Respite House](#) in Santa Cruz, which offers programs in a homelike setting.

An important part of FERC's assistance is urging family members and caregivers to practice self-care. “Sometimes you just have to do something fun for yourself,” Foster said. “Take time for a cup of tea, read, take a walk, or practice a hobby.”

FERC's offices are located at:

- **East Oakland Main Office:** Eastmont Town Center, 7200 Bancroft Avenue, Suite 269, 510-746-1700.
- **San Leandro:** 525 Estudillo Avenue, 510-895-8710. This office has a Spanish-speaking family advocate.
- **Fremont:** 39155 Liberty Street, Suite D, 510-790-1010. The office is co-located with 23 other organizations.
- **Livermore:** 1453 First Street, 925-583-3772.

For more information, <http://www.askferc.org/>. Again, the FERC Warm Line is 1-888-896-3372.

Past articles in the Speaker Notes series are available online at www.thomasthomas.com under “NAMI East Bay.” Also available is a copy of the brochure “Medications for Mental Illness.”

Musings from the President

I was told I needed something called a “roku” or “ruko” so that I could stream stuff on my TV—not that I watch TV much or really understand what streaming is. Nevertheless, I ventured forth and entered the big box electronics store at the Emeryville mall. Being immediately and urgently assailed by lights and beeps and black-and-silver, hard-edged, plastic-cased merchandise, the purpose and function of most being entirely unclear to me, I floundered, not really knowing what I was looking for, much less knowing any kind of identifiable category that would help me find it. Finally, a uniformed salesperson, who looked to be about 14 years old, pointed me in a direction, where another young person, not making eye contact, indicated the shelf where I should look. Finding something that approximated my quest, I managed to pay the cashier and stumble out into the sunlight.

But what was that across the parking lot? Michael’s, a place I frequent for craft, party, and just-having-fun projects. With a lilt in my gait, I crossed the lot and entered a different world ... aah! The store was awash with spring colors and with soft, fuzzy, just plain old pretty things to touch and create with and know about. There were few mysteries, just lots of ideas and beckoning projects. My blood pressure decreased, I regained my sense of composure, and I felt I knew what I was doing and where I was. I had found my comfort zone.

Which leads me, as usual, to a point that’s relevant to our common issue: we all need our comfort zones.

Many of our loved ones work so hard to find that place. And it’s extremely difficult when you hear internal and distracting voices, or are over-sensitive to smells and visual stimuli, or experience racing thoughts, or are preoccupied with fear, anxiety, and paranoia. How terribly difficult this must be! Research tells us that the processing speed and efficiency of those with certain forms of mental illness are severely compromised. Yet we don’t always appropriately accommodate our loved one’s unique coping needs, and we make demands as if everything is perfectly fine—just as clerks in electronic stores treat old women. I think we have to seriously respect and explore the arena of comfort zones, so that

places of personal respite and space are available to those who so desperately crave them. And we need to acknowledge that, while a bare minimalist room or a dark cluttered space may not be our own personal kind of respite area, it may be comforting to our relative.

—Liz Rebensdorf, President, NAMI East Bay

Thank You!

We appreciate a recent donation made to our library from **Karen Muhlin**, who provided some very useful family-friendly books. They are now available to loan out.

NAMI Walk on May 30

At the end of May, the festive and spirited annual NAMI Walk is held in Golden Gate Park, with hundreds of families, providers, and consumers in attendance. Energies are high, music is energetic and robust, and NAMI folks from around the Bay Area gather to participate in this huge fund-raising, stigma-busting, awareness-raising event.

Because of some logistics involving seed money and other obligations, NAMI East Bay participates more passively than actively, but we’ve always fielded a team of NAMI Rain Dancers who have raised money for the cause, not the affiliate. Things are a bit different this year for the May 30 event, and we encourage your participation in one of two active teams:

- **Steps Towards Ending Stigma** is the local NAMI On Campus team from UC Berkeley (see related article on next page). They already have nine registered walkers with a collective goal of \$1,000. Our folks can either donate to them or register to walk with them.
- **ACBHCS Wellness Workers** is the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services team, lead by Gigi Crowder, Ethnic Services Manager/Cultural Responsiveness Coordinator, and Manuel Jimenez, Director of the county’s Behavioral Health Care Services. NAMI walk proceeds will be divided equally across all four Alameda County affiliates. Two chartered buses will take participants to the park, one from Fremont and one

from Oakland. Call Gigi at 292-8318 for information.

Go to [2015 NAMI Walks Bay Area](#) for donation and participation information.

NAMI On Campus

The group NAMI On Campus has been officially registered and recognized as an organization on the Berkeley campus. They have a growing membership and an advisor who is a professor in both the English and Disability Studies departments at UC Berkeley. Officers are President Julie Bernardo and Vice-President Jose Munoz. The club is now awaiting official recognition by NAMI National. They will be participating in the NAMI Walk (see above).

Mental Health First Aid

Berkeley Mental Health Services and NAMI East Bay are co-sponsoring a free eight-hour training course on Saturday, May 9, from 8 am to 5 pm, at the South Berkeley Senior Center. This course teaches how to help people who are in crisis or developing a mental illness. Topics include signs of addiction and mental illness, the impact of substance use and mental disorders, a five-step action plan to assess a situation and provide appropriate help, and local resources and where to turn for help. To register, email mhfa@cityofberkeley.info with your name, phone, email, occupation, employer name, and brief description of why you're enrolling.

Hearing Voices Network

The Hearing Voices Network is comprised of people who see, hear, feel, and think things that others may not experience—and the family members of these individuals. For more information refer to www.bayareahearingvoices.org. The Voices, Visions and Different Realities Group for Family Members meets biweekly on Thursday evenings at NAMI East Bay offices; contact Ed (edherzog@comcast.net) or Carla (carla295@sbcglobal.net) for more information. The local weekly group for those with these ongoing experiences meets first and third Mondays, 6-7:30 pm, Berkeley Drop in Center, 3234 Adeline Avenue, Berkeley.

Innovation Grants Field Testing

As part of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), 18-month Innovation Grants in the area of Meeting Needs of Isolated Adults were awarded. Margot Dashiell, our vice-president, is heading an exciting project for isolated residents of an Oakland SRO (single room occupancy) hotel. We have been contacted to recruit field test participants. Family members and consumers are crucial to this process and will be given a stipend for their participation. Please contact Ta@acinnovations.org if you're interested. At that point, you can contact the projects directly or go through the county. Project descriptions can be found under "What's New" on our former website (www.nami.org/sites/namieastbay) or the new one (www.namieastbay.org).

Services for Isolated Adults

This group of consumers continues to hold special interest to those of us at NAMI East Bay. One of our board members has been leading a low-key socialization group for the last 18 months, but due to the renewed presence of Wellness Centers in the community (see below), we are changing our focus and going in a new direction. We are exploring the concept of family game nights, where families and loved ones join us for a socialization experience involving casual games and activities and pizza. Before we set this up, we need to assess interest—so we know how much pizza to purchase. Please let us know if you're interested. This activity is wholly dependent on your response.

BACS Wellness Centers

Bay Area Community Services (BACS) offers four Wellness Centers—in Oakland, Pleasanton, Hayward, and Fremont—with the goal of engaging participants in their own recovery through wellness action planning, core and elective classes, and activities. They are open to any individual seeking wellness supports on a drop-in basis, Monday to Friday, 8:30-5:30. For activity schedules and contacts see www.bayareacs.org/wellness-centers.html.



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Please check your mailing label. If the code "15" is over your name on the right side of the label, your dues are current through 2015. If your mailing label indicates a previous year, or nothing at all, your dues are not current.

We urge you to mail your 2015 dues now. And if you can afford to add a bit more, please do so. Your \$35 NAMI East Bay membership gives you our newsletter six times a year, the quarterly "Connection" from NAMI-California, and the NAMI-National "Advocate." NAMI East Bay is nonprofit [501(c)3] and your dues and contributions are tax deductible.

Family Membership, \$35 per year Open Door Membership, \$3 per year

Make checks payable to "NAMI EAST BAY" and mail to NAMI East Bay, 980 Stannage Avenue, Albany, California 94706

Contact me for Family to Family Education Class

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I'd like to volunteer:	<input type="checkbox"/> In the Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Grant Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership Committee
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