Tips & Guidelines for Creating and Delivering
NAMI Ending the Silence for Families

• **Use your own words**
  
  It will be easier to remember your talking points if they are in your own words. When developing your talking points, for each slide you should ask yourself, “How can I CONCISELY restate the key points in my own words?”

• **Be concise!**
  
  When you are creating your talking points, make an effort to be concise with every point you make. Participant’s minds may wander if you spend too much time on any one topic.

  A good rule of thumb when developing your talking points is to aim for an average of about one minute for each slide. Several slides are meant to be very brief and should not take more than a few seconds. Keep in mind that the goal is to deliver your presentation within 20 minutes.

• **Keep in mind the purpose of NAMI Ending the Silence for Families**

  The purpose of the presentation is to:

  o Inform families on the facts about mental health conditions so that they can identify when challenging behavior may be something more
  o Expose families to the lived experience of coping with symptoms of mental health conditions to increase their knowledge and empathy with young people
  o Inform families of resources available to encourage early intervention when symptoms are suspected
  o Raise mental health awareness
  o Reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness

  This is not your only chance to get across all there is to know about mental health and youth. Instead, this is an opportunity to raise mental health awareness and help families understand their role in prevention and early intervention.

• **Use examples that families can relate to**

  One of the best ways to keep participants engaged and to illustrate/emphasize key points is to use examples that families can relate to. As you’re developing your talking points, ask yourself, “What would this look like to a parent or caregiver or what example can I share that would resonate with family members?”
• **Don’t read the slides**

Your talking points should enhance what is on the slides instead of repeat exactly what’s written on them. Participants will read the slide content on their own. If all you do is read directly from the slides, you will lose your audience and they won’t absorb the messages you are trying to get across. Instead, use the slides to help you pace yourself and as a reminder for what you want to say.

• **Speak loud enough to be heard by all**

Project your voice so that even people in the very back of the room can hear you. It is okay to check in with your audience to verify you’re speaking loudly enough.

• **Use effective eye contact and body language**

Making eye contact can be challenging, but is worth practicing. Avoid looking directly at the slides. Instead, use them as a reference and do everything possible to connect with the audience by making eye contact with individuals in the group. Another way to better engage your audience is to move among the participants instead of standing in one spot.

• **Slow it down**

This presentation is not about getting the most amount of information as possible across to participants for each slide. Instead, it’s much more about focusing on a few key points for each slide that build upon the overall purpose of the presentation. It’s important not to try to cram a bunch of information into your presentation by talking extra fast. Concentrate on speaking clearly and at a relaxed pace.
Key Points

- Give an enthusiastic introduction for yourself and the other presenter

- **Disclaimer:** we are NOT asking you to be diagnosticians, only to be expert observers, to recognize the warning signs of mental health conditions and to reach out when you suspect a young person is experiencing symptoms. Whether it be your child, your child’s friend or classmate or other young family members.

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide you with the skills and resources to recognize the warning signs of mental health conditions and know how to respond effectively.

Talking Points
Key Points

- Get a feel for your audience and create a sense of being “in this together”
- Ask for a raise of hands to these questions: Have you ever wondered if your child was developing at the same rate as other children? Found yourself worrying about a behavior being “just a phase” or something to really be concerned about? How many of you have ever been overwhelmed by your child’s behavior? Feel frustrated when having to work with teachers at school to address their concerns with your child’s behavior?
- Share that your time together will help address their common concerns and frustrations, giving them resources and useful tools.

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Youth who feel well, do well.
- Mental health conditions can affect all aspects of a young person’s life from their ability to complete schoolwork to their relationships with friends and family.

Talking Points
Key Points

- Mental health conditions in youth are common.
- Many young people don’t get help when they need it
- You can help to change this by recognizing the warning signs, responding effectively and helping them get the help that they need for more positive outcomes

Talking Points
Key Points

- There can be serious consequences when we don’t intervene if a child or adolescent is showing early signs of mental health issues. These consequences can continue to impact them throughout their life:
  - Isolate from friends, family and society
  - Drop out of school
  - Get in trouble with the law
  - Die by suicide

Talking Points
Key Points

- This video was created entirely by high school students as a part of the Directing Change project in California.

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Here are some of the most common conditions you may hear about, but these are just labels.
- We’re not focusing on labels here, we are going to concentrate on the challenges it creates for youth
- Important to note that every experience with mental illness is different, even with the same diagnosis. Recovery, though, is possible!

Talking Points
Key Points

- The good news is with early identification and treatment, recovery is not just possible for young people, but probable
- There are several things you can do to help connect your students to the help they need
- The earlier they get help, the better the outcome will be

Talking Points

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Key Points

- You can help recognize mental health issues early by following these four steps.
- Explain that we will be covering these steps in more detail throughout the presentation and read each step. This is the only slide you will read.

Talking Points
Key Points

- Provide CONCISE examples from your lived experience of what these warning signs looked like for you or your family member while in school. For example,
  - For severe out of control behavior, “My daughter began driving recklessly and engaging in sexual activity in public places.”
  - For severe mood swings, “I would be happy and participating in class one minute and then I would get really sad and start crying at my desk.”
  - For drastic changes in behavior, “My son was always very well behaved in class and when he began experiencing symptoms he became disruptive—he would talk loudly and interrupt his teacher.”

- Relate these warning signs to what a parent/caregiver might observe as often as possible

Talking Points
Key Points

- Provide CONCISE examples of these warning signs relating them to what a parent/caregiver might observe as often as possible
- It’s important to take these warning signs seriously
- Remember, this could be something they observe in their child’s classmate as well

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Youth with mental health conditions can often be the target of bullying. It’s important to know the warning signs.

- Bullying is an unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time
  - Kids who bully use their power – physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity – to control or harm others
  - Bullying behaviors happen more than once

- Examples of bullying: Verbal (teasing, name calling), Social (leaving someone out on purpose, spreading rumors), Physical (hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, taking or breaking someone’s things)

- Additional resources can be found on stopbullying.gov

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Youth with mental health conditions can also bully others. Those who bully don’t need to be stronger or bigger
- Children who bully can be
  - well connected, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity and like to dominate or be in charge of others
  - more isolated and may be depressed or anxious, have low self-esteem, be less involved in school, easily pressured or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others

Talking Points
Key Points

- Youth with mental health conditions experience constant, unrelieved and challenging symptoms
- Important to remember these aren’t always an indication of something serious
- Give examples of how intensity, duration and level of distress play into a concerning behavior vs. typical behavior:
  - Feeling of nervousness and distress over an upcoming test but it resolves after the test is taken (typical)
  - Feeling of nervousness and distress over a test, causing physical ailments or anxiety that causes them to miss class. This happens for every upcoming test (atypical)

Talking Points
Key Points

- Provide CONCISE examples of some of these indicators:
  - For frequently seeks special conditions, “Frequently asks for extensions on assignments, makeup tests or extra credit.”
  - For patterns of perfectionism, “Cannot accept anything less than an A or doesn’t respond well to constructive criticism.”

Talking Points
Key Points

- Having a child with a mental health condition can be challenging for the whole family
- Here are some of the behaviors that you might see at home when your child is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition
- Transition into warning signs of suicide: sometimes when youth are dealing with the symptoms of a mental health condition, they can feel alone, that they don’t belong or that there is no hope which in turn can lead to thoughts of suicide

Talking Points

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Key Points – use this slide only when presenting for families of younger children (elementary grades and below)

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- Transition into warning signs of suicide: sometimes when youth are dealing with the symptoms of a mental health condition, they can feel alone, that they don’t belong or that there is no hope which in turn can lead to thoughts of suicide

Talking Points
Key Points

- If you notice these warning signs of suicide, take them seriously and act immediately
- Provide CONCISE examples that illustrate some of these warning signs that families can relate to
- There are usually, but not always warning signs. Sometimes they can be subtle. It isn’t always obvious, which is why it’s so important for families and youth to be educated about the warning signs of mental health conditions

Talking Points
Key Points

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Talking Points
Key Points

• You’ve noticed some warning signs of suicide, now you must respond immediately

• Asking a young person if they’re thinking about suicide will not put thoughts of suicide in their head. Asking the direct question is important.

• When warning signs are recognized and someone intervenes, suicide can usually be prevented

Talking Points

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Key Points

- If it’s a non-life-threatening warning sign this is how you go about responding (not suicide)
- Talk with your child or if you notice warning signs in your child’s friend(s), or other loved ones, contact their family and offer appropriate support
- Examples of appropriate support:
  - If they tell you, as a trusted adult, it’s important for them to feel heard but you can’t promise confidentiality. It’s important that you communicate any conversations with the child’s family.
  - If you feel that they might be thinking of suicide, don’t leave them alone. Contact their family and work with them on getting help immediately.
  - It’s possible that they feel more comfortable sharing with you as a trusted adult, but you must set boundaries and the child’s family must be involved.
- Know what your school can offer you in terms of support for working with your child
- Work with your child’s doctor to address concerns

Talking Points
Key Points

- Talking with your child about warning signs you’ve noticed is important in opening lines of communication, but it isn’t always easy.

- Here are some tips to prepare for the conversation:

  - It’s important to listen rather than offer up solutions. Sharing feelings that they might not understand can be hard for your child; it’s important that they know you hear them.

  - Make sure you’re prepared to share specific examples of warning signs that you’ve noticed.

  - Be prepared for your child to not share, but don’t feel defeated. It might take several tries but the important thing is that they know you’re there for support.

Talking Points
Key Points

- Showing that you're concerned about their behaviors will not make things worse, it'll help validate what they've been thinking and feeling, making you both more connected.

- Your role isn't to diagnose your child, keep your message simple:
  - You've noticed behaviors that you are concerned about
  - You are there for him
  - There are things you can do together that can help them feel better

- Express concern, but with a calm, matter-of-fact attitude. They will likely take their cues from you—if you remain calm and matter-of-fact, they likely will be too.

Talking Points
Key Points

- It’s important to listen and show students that you hear them
- Avoid focusing on your response – work to understand their concerns
- When we say, “don’t promise confidentiality” it means that we can’t keep any danger or immediate threat confidential

Talking Points
Key Points

- Teachers and school staff spend a lot of time with your child
- They can be an important piece in recognizing warning signs early and avoiding a crisis
- It’s important to have regular communication with your child’s school
- Realize that every school is different when offering classroom adjustments
- Educate yourself on what’s available to your child and work with the school to come up with accommodations that will help your child be successful in school

Talking Points

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Key Points

- It’s important to stay organized when communicating with your child, their school and their doctors
- Having a filing system to keep all records and conversations in one place makes doctor’s visits easier
- You’ll want to prepare your concerns and questions prior to the appointment since visits can be short

Talking Points
Key Points

- What is the best way to ease someone's pain and suffering? In this beautifully animated RSA Short, Dr Brené Brown reminds us that we can only create a genuine empathic connection if we are brave enough to really get in touch with our own fragilities.

Talking Points
Key Points

- Hand raising activity: How many of you have: Shared concerns with teachers only to hear there's no problem at school? Had family members blame your child's behaviors on the way you parent? Ever denied a behavior that your child has, whether it's a mental health warning sign or just something that's not "the norm"? Launched into protective mode when your child's been sick, has been treated unfairly or has simply been defeated by a situation?

- These are all common emotional responses from anyone who deals with a traumatic event

- Getting a mental health diagnosis can be traumatic for young people and their family

Talking Points

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**Key Points**

- The third step is to work together, with your child and school staff, as a team.
- What does this mean?

**Talking Points**

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Key Points

- Young people often act differently at home than at school.
- It is essential to coordinate with school staff to make sure you have all the information you need to figure out what is going on with your child.
- By working together, you can help connect your child to the appropriate services and supports they need earlier.

Talking Points

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**Key Points**

- You can’t assume that school staff will understand your child’s situation
- Ask teachers how they prefer to communicate. Email? Text? School site? Phone?
- Do your research. Be knowledgeable about your child’s condition and what helps and hurts.
- Share reputable resources with your child’s school and refer them to Ending the Silence for students and school staff

**Talking Points**
Key Points

- Important to know what options are available for your child
- Talk with the proper staff and share the needs of your child and your family

Talking Points

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Key Points

- These are examples of questions you might ask when meeting with your child’s teacher.

- When possible, involve your child in decision making around accommodations. It’s important for them to know that they are valuable in this process.

- You’ll want to ask for a copy of any records or documents that you’re basing decisions on. For example: test scores, lists of goals met or not yet met, progress reports, disciplinary records, etc.

- Note: some states are required to give a copy of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) handbook prior to any meeting that involves school accommodations for a student.

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Key Points

- Always know that there are resources and support available for your child and your family!

Talking Points
Key Points

- Being organized and involved in every aspect of your child’s care makes you an expert
- Advocate for the treatments, school accommodations and health professionals that you and your child feel are the best for them
- Surround yourself with families who understand, who can provide support and encouragement – find NAMI!

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Here are some examples of how you can help your child be resilient and in charge of their mental health

Talking Points

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Key Points

• An additional resource that families can keep on hand and share with their child’s school

Talking Points
Key Points

- NAMI programs available for family members and individuals with mental health conditions.
- HelpLine for questions and resources as well as the website

Talking Points
Key Points

- Work with your school’s decision makers to make this program available for students.
- Research has found that NAMI ETS for Students increases help seeking behavior for themselves and their friends as well as knowledge around mental health conditions.

Talking Points

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Key Points

- NAMI’s Ending the Silence for School Staff provides the same information we shared with you today as well as recommendations on how best to work with families of students with mental health conditions, helpful tips to use in the classroom and more.

- Help have everyone at the table gain more knowledge about mental health conditions

Talking Points

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Key Points

- NAMI’s signature program for families/caregivers whose child/adolescent might be experiencing the symptoms of a mental health condition
- Great resource to offer to families who have a child that’s been exhibiting difficult behaviors

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Share what your NAMI affiliate has available for families and youth
- Write contact information on the board

Talking Points
Key Points

- None

Talking Points

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Acknowledgements


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Key Points

• None

Talking Points

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Key Points

- Sincerely thank teachers and staff for all they do for students.
- Remind participants that they are making a difference just by being here today
- Introduce Young Adult presenter

Talking Points