



# History of: **NAMI** Orange County, NY

National Alliance on Mental Illness



NAMI Orange County, NY (previously known as NAMI-AMICO Incorporated, as well as AMICO [Alliance on Mental Illness in the County of Orange]), began as a small group of dedicated families who had a family member hospitalized at Middletown Psychiatric Center (MPC). At that time, families who were looking for support had nowhere to turn. Family support programs were non-existent in Orange County. One family, devastated by their son's diagnosis of schizophrenia, asked the hospital if there would be a way to meet other families who also had a family member with a mental illness. In 1984, MPC brought together families of their patients for the first time. It started as a small group but quickly grew into AMICO. In 1985, these families joined other families throughout the state and became an affiliate of the newly formed "Alliance on Mental Illness of New York".

AMICO's bylaws written by the original families stated that the intent of AMICO was to provide support for families and friends of people with mental illness, advocate for better services, foster research, work to change stereotypes and overcome the stigma associated with chronic mental illness. Also at this time, AMICO and the Mental Health Association in Orange County, Inc. formed a collaboration to help and support families.

In the eighties, many AMICO members found there was little help available to families when there was a crisis. They advocated for a mobile mental health team that would come to "them" when needed. Another family, concerned because no housing program seemed to meet the needs of their family member, advocated to meet this need with non-conventional housing. These advocacy efforts brought Mobile Mental Health and the "Home To Stay Program" to Orange County. Families have also worked together with providers at the county meetings to provide, promote and improve mental health services for their loved ones. AMICO was given one designated seat on the County's Community Services Board.

The name AMICO was changed to NAMI-AMICO in September, 1998 when all state affiliates became part of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). In 2005, as part of an initiative sponsored by NAMI-NYS, NAMI-AMICO became incorporated. In 2016, our name became NAMI Orange County, NY; referred to locally as NAMI Orange.

In addition to our monthly education meetings, our organization is currently providing several **programs on an on-going basis. The first five programs listed below are \*NAMI Signature Programs** in which the facilitators/presenters/instructors have received specific NAMI training in order to become credentialed:

**\*Family To Family:** a 12 week (one night/week) NAMI educational program structured to help family and significant others who are caregivers understand and support people with serious mental illness while maintaining their own well-being

**\*NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group:** Weekly peer-led support group for people living with a mental illness

**\*NAMI Family Support:** Monthly structured support group for family, friends, partners and/or caregivers of adult (18+) loved ones with serious mental illness

**\*In Our Own Voice:** people with mental health conditions share their compelling personal stories as an interactive presentation to groups in the community

**\*Ending the Silence:** An in-school presentation designed to teach middle and high school students about the signs and symptoms of mental illness, how to recognize the early warning signs and the importance of acknowledging those warning signs.

**-Families Helping Families:** a team of NAMI Orange volunteers that provides information to the families of patients in the Behavioral Unit at Orange Regional Medical Center

**-NAMI Orange Outreach:** Distributing information to communities, libraries, events

**-HELPLINE 845-956-6264:** NAMI Orange volunteers respond to callers in order to provide information regarding availability of services, support groups, etc. Over the years, our group of families has become Orange County's Voice on Mental Illness. NAMI Orange is very grateful for the office space provided to us by Rehabilitation Support Services, Inc.

**Mailing Address:** NAMI Orange County, NY PO Box 637 Middletown, NY 10940

Obtain meetings and support group schedule/locations through the following contacts:

**Email:** [namiorangeny@warwick.net](mailto:namiorangeny@warwick.net)

**Website:** [namiorangeny.org](http://namiorangeny.org)

**Phone:** 845-956-6264 or toll free: 1-866-906-6264