



Candidate Questionnaire Sample Questions

A candidate questionnaire is a powerful tool to advance the public policy goals of your NAMI. To help get you started, below are sample questions you can include in your questionnaire. For more information, visit www.vote4mentalhealth.org.

People Get Help Early

- Fifty percent of all mental health conditions appear by age 14, and seventy-five percent by age 24, but only half receive treatment. What do you propose to ensure youth and young adults can access the mental health services and supports they need?
- The average delay between onset of a mental illness and a person receiving treatment is 11 years. During this delay, symptoms worsen, and it becomes harder to stay in a job or school, and harder to get and stay well. What would you do to ensure people get treatment early in their condition?
- We're facing a shortage of mental health professionals, meaning it's more challenging to find care when you need it. Over half of adults with mental illness did not receive treatment in 2018. How would you address the mental health workforce shortage, particularly to reflect the diversity of our community?

People Get the Best Possible Care

- Mental health parity—covering mental health care at the same levels as physical health care—has been hard to achieve. What would you propose to ensure people with mental health conditions experience equitable insurance coverage compared to physical health conditions?
- More people than ever are recognizing the growing need for mental health services, particularly during times of crisis or economic downturns. How will you protect and expand mental health services to meet community needs?
- More than one in three people in the U.S. have symptoms of anxiety and depression as a result of this pandemic. How will you ensure mental health is not forgotten in your response to the effects of COVID-19?
- Instead of receiving timely mental health care, many people are forced to wait in emergency rooms and jails for an inpatient mental health spot to become available. How would you make sure that every person that needs help can get care quickly and humanely?
- Research has led to the development of new ways to care for mental illness, like the highly effective, team-based Coordinated Specialty Care model for early psychosis. How would you ensure innovative evidence-based practices are available in our community?
- Since 2000, the suicide rate has jumped approximately 40% in this country, with dramatic increases among blue collar workers and children. How would you address the suicide crisis?



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- Providing veterans with quality mental health care is all of our responsibility, but our veterans are struggling. While VA serves millions of veterans each year, it partners with community mental health providers to increase access to life-saving services. What will you do to help our veterans locally?
- Mental health care is not one-size-fits-all; services and supports need to be tailored to the people served (i.e. communities of color, LGBTQ communities, etc.). How will you help our community provide culturally competent mental health care?
- More than half (51%) of opioids are prescribed to people with mental health conditions. As we work to turn the tide against the opioid crisis, what are your solutions to address co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions?
- The unemployment rate for people with mental illness is higher than that of their peers without mental health conditions. Yet, many people with mental illness want to work—and can work with the right supports. How do you propose to help people with mental illness get and keep gainful employment?
- Lack of stable housing can be one of the biggest barriers to recovery. People can't engage in treatment without a safe place to live. How do you propose to address the lack of affordable housing for people with mental health conditions?

People Get Diverted from Justice System Involvement

- Two million people with mental health conditions are booked into our nation's jails and prisons every year, many arrested because of the symptoms of their condition. In jail, people with mental health conditions tend to stay longer as their conditions worsen. What would you do to address this?
- When a person is experiencing a mental health crisis, they should receive mental health care—not handcuffs. What policies would you implement to help?
- People with mental illness who are facing criminal charges are being held in jails as they wait for mental health services to enable them to participate in their trial. Unfortunately, they are often held for far longer than the sentence for their alleged crime. How will you address this problem?