



NAMI Walks

National Alliance on Mental Illness

#StigmaFree



Fundraising Manual

We appreciate your commitment to helping the members of our community who live with mental illness.

You are an integral part of our NAMIWalks success and our mission. Each dollar you raise goes directly toward providing no-cost resources, support and programs to people in need. Together, we can strengthen communities across the country and improve the lives of those who live with mental illness and their loved ones.

Fundraising is not only beneficial, but it can be fun too. If you have questions or need information, please visit NAMIWalks.org or contact your team captain for assistance.

Enjoy the walk!

Research shows that people are more likely to donate to somebody they know. The more you share your participation in NAMIWalks, the more likely people will support your effort and donate to your cause. The more you share and engage with your friends and community about your NAMIWalks effort, the closer you'll get to your fundraising goal. This manual includes some best practices that will prepare you for your fundraising efforts and help ensure a successful experience.



Draft a Simple Fundraising Plan

You will find that fundraising is easy and efficient when you have a defined goal and plan. From setting a fundraising goal to sending a thank you note, mapping the steps in advance with a plan takes the mystery out of the process.

These ten steps will help you prepare your plan:

1. Start your own fundraising page on NAMIWalks.org. If you are part of a NAMIWalks team, connect with your team captain and register through your team on the site.
2. Set and register your fundraising goal; aim high to motivate yourself and your donors.
3. Create two lists of prospects: one of people to contact by letter or email and one of people to contact in other ways. Include a list of businesses and other associations. Create a timeline for these asks.
4. Prepare a brief but compelling story; people are known to donate more generously when they are moved to care, and stories highlighting any personal connection to the cause can be extremely effective.
5. Prepare posts for your social networks, including the link to your fundraising page.
6. Review the [list of activities](#) and select some that work for you or create your own.
7. Distribute materials. Make sure you carry NAMIWalks printed material to hand out on the fly.
8. Ask early and often; people may need some time to donate.
9. Check in with your team captain or Walk Manager when or if you need any support and to share your progress.
10. Prepare a thank you note to send to donors, and after the event, share photos and your outcome.



Initiate Online Fundraising

When you register with NAMIWalks at NAMIWalks.org, you will automatically receive a personalized web page. If you need assistance, be sure to ask your team captain for guidance. Follow these four steps to complete your online fundraising effort.

1. **Set up your unique NAMIWalks web page.** First, enter your fundraising goal and initiate your fundraising effort. You are always free to go back and adjust your goal. Follow instructions on your page to personalize your information including why you are walking in NAMIWalks and what it means to you. People want to be inspired. Therefore, share stories that inspire people to support your cause, and share them as widely as possible with your networks.
2. **Go social.** Share your story--your reason for walking--on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media, explaining the role of NAMI in your experience or the experience of a loved one. Consider going LIVE on Facebook or creating an Instagram story for increased visibility. Use the hashtags #NAMIWalks #stigmafree and #walkformentalhealth to brand your efforts.
3. **Reach out.** Email the donations and sponsorship links for your NAMIWalks webpage to friends, family, colleagues, local businesses, clubs etc. By selecting the EMAIL tab on your NAMIWalks web page, you can use the prewritten messages provided to send to your community contacts or edit this template to customize your own. Post these links to your social media pages and let your online network know about your participation in NAMIWalks and how to help. Add a note about your participation and links in your personal email signature so that everyone who receives an email from you will see that you are participating in NAMIWalks and have a direct link to your fundraising page.
4. **Monitor.** Check back on your web page to see who has donated. Send “thank you” notes and emails to these individuals. If appropriate, tweet “thank you” messages and use the hashtags #StigmaFree and #NAMIWalks. Update your page frequently to keep people checking back.

In addition to email and digital efforts to your friends and contacts, letters can be used to reach out to the members of your community, clubs, organizations and others as well. A simple letter sent through the conventional postal delivery services can work wonders to help you reach your goal.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Consider the following tips suggestions to enhance your efforts.

Writing a Fundraising Letter or Email

You are encouraged to write letters and send emails to everyone in your personal and professional networks. This personal communication is also the way to ask someone to join and/or support NAMIWalks and begin to have meaningful impact on confronting barriers to understanding and build bridges within the community. Some answers to questions you may have include:

Why is letter or email writing so important?

Reaching out through letters and email appeals raises awareness about NAMI and mental illness and promotes giving. By encouraging and supporting walkers to tell their NAMI story and the impact mental illness has had on their lives, we can begin to change the way our community views this issue. Moreover, people who take part in letter writing campaigns raise 5 to 10 times more money than those who don't.

When should your letter or email be sent?

Now—today, tomorrow and continuously until Walk Day.

Who should send them?

Everyone!

What should my letter or email say?

Include information about NAMI and our mission and a personal story. Use the NAMIWalks material you have to advise you on how to describe NAMI's mission and the vital work of the organization to ensure consistency and congruency. Make sure your email includes the link to your personal NAMIWalks web page so the recipients can easily donate online. Research indicates that donors are more likely to make convenient online donations than to write a paper check.

What key elements should I include into my letter or email?

Tell people that you are walking in NAMIWalks and state the date of the Walk. Make it personal. Tell them why you are walking and provide answers to the following questions:

- Why is this cause important?
- How has NAMI helped you or others?
- Why is this your cause?

Tell a story that can help donors see the benefits of the programs and the impact they have on people's lives. Storytelling can change people's lives and inspire them to help.

on Walk Day. For participating Walk sites, you may earn additional gifts at greater fundraising levels. Check with your Local Walk Manager to find out more.

Why is it important to reach out to my contacts for support?

Seeking pledges for the Walk is a key to overall success of your effort. Research shows that donating and volunteering bring tremendous benefits to those who give. Giving, in fact, enriches people's lives and helping your donors see the benefits of a random act of kindness can help them change their personal behavior. They might provide or increase their financial support for your cause or increase their volunteering efforts. Helping see the meaning of their donation through an appeal letter is critical. NAMIWalks is your NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate's largest fundraising effort each year, and every dollar counts—no donation is too small. See sample emails below:

Sample 1:

Dear Friends:

My name is ...I live in ...My husband has been diagnosed with...He has been in and out of hospitals for the last 5 years and is currently in the state hospital in Gotham City. Without going into detail, this illness has devastated our family. NAMI Gotham City, the National Alliance of Mental Illness of Gotham City, will be holding their annual NAMIWalks on Oct. 1. I am asking you to support funding for NAMI Gotham City's family and individual support and education programs. It is the best—and really the only—resource to assist families of people affected by mental illness.

If someone you know has struggles with a mental health condition like this, then maybe you have seen it first-hand. It is impossible to describe the strain mental illness places on family members like me and the desperate need families have for help. Without support group meetings such as those offered through NAMI Gotham City, many families would collapse under the stress. NAMI Gotham City support groups and education programs help prevent this from happening.

These programs are offered at no cost to those in need of help and hope. Your support of NAMIWalks will help make sure these programs and services are available to the next family who needs them. Thank you for your consideration of a contribution. To sponsor me, please visit my personal walker web page at [provide link].

Sample 2:

NAMI Gotham City, the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Gotham City, will be holding their 9th Annual NAMIWalks on Oct. 1.

Please join me and hundreds of other dedicated individuals who want to make an impact and statement on how mental illness is understood. Awareness is an important element of this walk—we want people to know that mental illness can affect anyone, anytime and anywhere. Mental health conditions do not discriminate and affect 1 in 5 Americans each year. Mental illness affects individual of any age, race, religion or income.

For over 20 years, NAMI Gotham City has provided support groups and education programs to individuals affected by mental illness and their loved ones at no cost. You should know that money raised in this effort stays in Gotham City to support the continuation of our many family programs. Funds raised also allow NAMI Gotham City to have a stronger presence in our community and to advocate in greater ways at the local, state and national levels on behalf of the millions affected by mental health conditions.

I hope you will help us today by making a tax-deductible contribution to NAMI Gotham City. Any amount is appreciated. To sponsor me as a walker in this event, please visit my personal walker web page at [provide link]. Thank you for your consideration of supporting this worthy cause.

MORE IDEAS ON HOW TO REACH OR EXCEED YOUR FUNDRAISING GOAL

Ask Your Company and Colleagues for Support

Take NAMIWalks to work. Use some of the signage available from your NAMIWalks team captain or other staff or volunteers, including posters, donation sheets and other materials, to promote your effort and encourage others to give or join you in walking. In addition, you can consider other ways to engage your employer, colleagues and coworkers in supporting you.

Workplace Giving

Many workplaces offer a matching gifts program. Check with your human resources (HR) department to see if this program exists in your workplace. The company may match any donations from their employees. Use this program to double the money you donate to your own campaign. If you receive donations from coworkers, ask them to take advantage of the matching gifts program as well.

Be sure to follow all instructions carefully through your HR department so gifts are properly matched. Use your company's name and materials to send letters to clients or other business partners asking for their support. Be sure to check with your management before doing so.

Host a dress-down day at work

Share your experiences with NAMI at work. Explain how the organization has made such an impact on you, your family and the community, then ask your co-workers to support NAMIWalks. For example, have employees pay \$5 to wear causal clothes or hats on a given day with all proceeds going to NAMIWalks. Make sure you clear this with your HR department in advance.

Host An Event

You can make your fundraising fun by using NAMIWalks as a rallying effort for a party or event. Some people ask for donations in lieu of birthday gifts or host parties and other events to encourage giving while building awareness for the cause. Consider one of the ideas offered here or make up your own. Also take pictures and post them in your social media communities to further encourage giving.

Host a karaoke or lip-sync party

Sell tickets for an evening of not-quite professional singing at a local bar, a community room or your home. Get people to donate money to stop their friends from singing or have a singing contest. Charge an entry fee and have the proceeds go to your team's fundraising goal. Raffles are always an easy way to add value to your event. Ask a few local businesses if they will donate products or services in return for a mention during the event. Charge \$2 for example, a ticket with all proceeds going to NAMIWalks.

Host a wine and cheese party

Gather an assortment of wines and cheese. Invite your friends and family over for a special party for \$20 per person (and you can try to get the wine and cheese donated, too, to save on costs).

Host a garage sale

Not only will this provide a great excuse for you to get organized, but you can raise unlimited funds for your walk. Advertise your participation in NAMIWalks at the sale to encourage donations as well. Sell baked goods or lemonade to raise additional funds. Email friends, family members and your community members about the upcoming sale and encourage them to donate items for the sale. Be sure to include a deadline for delivering the items to you, allowing ample time to sort and price the items.

Have a car wash and offer other services

Let your neighbors and your community know that you will do tasks around town in exchange for a specified donation. Wash cars, mow lawns, clean, garden, babysit, drive neighbors' children to their after school tutor, dog-sit or do anything else you can imagine. Make it clear that you are raising money to be donated to NAMIWalks. Your community may offer you more opportunities to support the cause.

Create a game tournament

Pick a favorite board game and invite friends and family to play in your tournament. If you like video games, host a video game party. Create teams and entry fees that will go towards your fundraising efforts. Have an incentive to participate and a grand prize for the winner. Even try to organize this event for your entire community and ask businesses to provide the grand prize.

Host an auction

Ask friends, family, local businesses and your company to donate items to a silent auction. Promote the silent auction like any other fundraising event. Providing constant updates, countdowns, descriptions of items and more lend success to silent auctions. Then, assemble the donors and the rest of your friends, family, colleagues and community to bid on these items.

Take a bit of time to research more innovative ways to raise funds to help you meet your goal. Ask others for their ideas as well or attend others' fundraising events to learn from them. Check in with your team captain for support. The more creative you are, the more opportunities you have to reach and exceed your fundraising goal. In the end, remember that fundraising is all about inviting more meaning into our lives and helping our community.

Approach Local Business

You can start by making a list of businesses that you think will donate. Remember that businesses you frequent are more likely to give, including your hair salon, dry cleaners, grocery stores, etc. Encourage the next business to join by mentioning the others who have already donated. Make your requests in person, and also have a copy of your NAMIWalks printed materials, brochure or handout, to leave behind. They may also need this for tax purposes. Ask for the person who will be making the decision, usually the store manager or owner rather than a clerk.

Tell the person who you are, where you live, who NAMI is and how they can help. Be aware that some businesses will respond immediately and others will want to think it over before responding. Don't be discouraged if businesses turn you down. They may get many requests or have specific donation policies. Follow up with the business if you don't hear back from them within a week. Invite the business to attend the event. Even if they don't donate, they may still be willing to post a NAMIWalks poster or postcard materials to help promote the event. Thank the business for taking the time to talk with you even if they don't donate.

Have a Business Challenge

Find two businesses, similar or different, willing to be challenged to see who can raise the most money. You can let your local newspaper know as they may print an article for the context and spotlight the winner.

Make an Announcement

Ask your local community group (town meeting, school event, church, etc.) if you can make a quick announcement about the Walk and how you are raising funds for the programs offered by NAMI. You can provide them with a link to your online team web page and event materials.

How to Raise \$500 IN SEVEN DAYS





NAMI Walks

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.namiwalks.org



For further information, contact your local NAMI Walks Manager.