

Outreach to diverse communities is imperative to assuring equal access to education and recovery to all Americans. The following steps may be utilized as guidelines to customizing your outreach plan:

1. Identify the target group: Be realistic and specific when choosing a community. Once you have identified the group, learn as much as you can about their characteristics and history in your area. Also research the group's beliefs about mental illness. Important questions to ask include:

- Is this community aware of mental illness?
- What are the levels of stigma about mental illness?
- Does the community have information about mental illness?
- Does the community see mental illness as an important issue?

The more you know about your targeted audience, the more successful you will be in engaging them in meaningful ways.

2. Identify key community leaders: Approach leaders from your targeted community group and ask them to partner with you. Cultivate relationships and take time to build trust. It is essential to have their support—these leaders are your community experts that will help identify community needs and how to successfully reach the group. As respected and recognized leaders, they will help you gain access, trust and attention.

3. Identify key community organizations: Resources are limited and partnership strengthens our capacity and reach. Partnering with local community organizations that work with your target group will provide a united front and increase outreach possibilities.

4. Decide the major focus of your activities: Your plan should build upon success already achieved with education programs, support groups and/or advocacy. It is also important to account for the expressed needs of your community partners when planning activities, but be sure to set reasonable goals. Some ideas include:

- Creation of culturally and linguistically appropriate pamphlets or videos about mental illness
- Establishment of a community-specific support group
- Setting a target of increasing diverse community membership by a specific percentage
- Lobbying state government officials to increase funding for mental health services to the target community

5. Dissemination and Publicity: Target local community organizations such as churches, racial/ethnic clubs, libraries, schools, grocery stores, clinics and any other area where the group frequents. Health care professionals from targeted group will be especially helpful. Create press releases, public service announcements and short newspaper articles detailing your efforts. Identify media outlets used by your target community; advertising your program in culturally appropriate media will ensure that information reaches the people you want to inform.

Visit www.nami.org/multicultural to access more detailed outreach tips and strategies in the **Multicultural Outreach Planning Guide for NAMI States & Affiliates**