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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**Headline: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Releases Report on Parity in Mental Health and Substance Use Care**

**(Hartford, Connecticut) May 6, 2015.** The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Connecticut (NAMI Connecticut), a state chapter of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, announces the release last month of NAMI's report: "**A Long Road Ahead—Achieving True Parity in Mental Health and Substance Use Care.**" This report has important implications for the mental health of individuals across the lifespan in Connecticut, including the mental health of children which is being celebrated during this month of May as National Children's Mental Health Awareness Month.

NAMI and its state chapters, including NAMI Connecticut, provide advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals affected by mental health conditions can build better lives.

NAMI's report, based on its survey that it conducted to assess the experience of people living with mental health conditions and their families with private insurance, *finds that states still have a long way to go to end discriminatory coverage of mental health and substance use disorders in health insurance policies. This applies to all states, including Connecticut.*

NAMI's survey findings are supplemented with an analysis of 84 health plans in the top 15 state (by exchange enrollment).

Among the report's findings:

- "[c]onsumers and family members report serious problems with finding mental health providers in their health plans;"
- "insurers are denying authorization for mental health care at higher levels than they are for other types of medical care;" and
- "[w]hen selecting health plans available in State Marketplaces, consumers and family members generally do not have access to information needed to make informed decisions."

In Connecticut, *"we've taken some good steps with carrier cooperation, that are consistent with recommendations in the NAMI parity report, including reforms on accessibility, uniformity of criteria and shortened time frames for utilization review, but finding providers and accessing needed medications is still difficult...[i]f parity is going to be a reality, we need to get everyone involved to make it the priority it should be."* **Victoria Veltri, state Healthcare Advocate, Office of the Healthcare Advocate.**

NAMI's report recommends, among other things, that insurers should be required to publish the clinical criteria they use to approve or deny care and that stronger enforcement of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), enacted by Congress in 2008, is needed.

To read the full NAMI report, go to: <http://bit.ly/1KMxKHo>

Information on **NAMI Connecticut** can be found at <http://www.namict.org>; including information on advocacy and public policy efforts.

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