



# NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATOR SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

*“As much as I already knew about running a support group, this training gave me many valuable guidelines and new techniques. I know I will run a much better group with these skills under my belt, with more participation and more group interaction. I want to thank the NAMI state facilitator trainers for an altogether delightful, if strenuous, series of training exercises.”* **Local Support Group Facilitator**

The NAMI Family Support Group Facilitator Skills Training model differs from the more traditional “share-and-care” model in that it offers an innovative set of group structures and processes specifically designed to help facilitators in their support work with caregivers dealing with mental illness. These various procedures come with clear guidelines to follow; used together, they encourage full group participation and result in upbeat, constructive support group meetings. Both seasoned and less experienced facilitators have found these new methods easy to learn, and a joy to utilize, because they steer the group process through many problematic situations which commonly undermine support group effectiveness.

As a facilitator, how do you guarantee that the meeting will start and stop on time? What do you do when someone monopolizes the group’s time? How do you respond to disrespectful group members? How do you shift a group away from “catastrophizing”, or handle the intense sadness a group expresses? What’s the best way to deal with “hot potato” subjects such as relapse, involuntary commitment or suicide? How do you encourage quiet people in the group to talk? What about participants who insist they have a problem that’s just not solvable? How do you help a group do its own work and not look for a leader direction at every turn?

NAMI family support group facilitators face these issues in their groups every day. Participants in the training testify that the skill-building offered in the 2-day training makes them feel much more confident and secure as support group leaders. Recognizing that NAMI support groups provide the entry point for thousands of family members new to NAMI, the state and affiliate organizations involved in this program report that the resulting improvement in their support groups correlates highly with increased membership and identification of new leadership.

The NAMI Family Support Group Facilitator Skills Training model has been adapted for consumer facilitator training and used in the NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group Program.

NAMI state organizations are encouraged to send facilitators to the annual NAMI National Family Support Group Facilitator Skills Workshop Training to become state trainers and will then conduct Facilitator Skills Training Workshops for local facilitators in their state.

Forty-four states, British Columbia, and Mexico promote the NAMI Family Support Group Facilitator Skills Training model. If you are a local support group facilitator and would like to attend a facilitator skills training, contact your state NAMI to find out when the next facilitator training session will be held.

NAMI National contact is: Marshall Epstein at 703/516-7975 or e-mail: [Marshall@nami.org](mailto:Marshall@nami.org) for information about the annual NAMI Family Support Group Training.