

Statement from Leading Mental Health and Substance Use Organizations on Drastic HHS Staffing Reductions

NAMI HELPLINE

February 2, 2025



Today, 12 leading national mental health and substance use organizations released a statement following the announcement of **drastic staffing cuts** at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):

As the nation's leading mental health, suicide prevention, and substance use organizations, we are deeply alarmed by the widespread, immediate staffing cuts and dismantling of entire offices occurring at HHS. HHS's critical work is vital to increasing access to mental health and substance use disorder care, improving suicide prevention efforts, stemming the opioid epidemic, and reimagining our nation's mental health crisis response.

HHS's activities touch the lives of virtually all Americans and play a significant role in helping people impacted by mental health conditions and substance use disorders in local communities across the country. However, these deep staffing cuts leave us with questions about how this vital, lifesaving work will continue — or how any of these changes would improve the mental health of Americans. The lack of clarity around these layoffs, compounded by the termination of staff who promote and ensure transparency across HHS, makes this situation even more dire.

This week's staff cuts across HHS leave us concerned about what comes next for the many mental health and substance use programs housed at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Health (NIH), and more. Unfortunately, the immediate reduction in force means these agencies will lose staff with years of experience and expertise, and the pathway for the transition of their knowledge and the critical services they operate is unclear. This has the potential to jeopardize years of work and recent progress, like reducing overdose deaths.

Our nation continues to face ongoing mental health, overdose, and suicide crises. As a country, we must ensure the functions of HHS and its agencies are able to continue their missions unimpeded to support the mental health of our communities as well

as to focus on addressing chronic disease with a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

On behalf of the people we represent, we urge the Administration to swiftly reconsider these changes. We call on the Secretary to explain the impact of these significant changes to HHS staffing for mental health, suicide prevention, and substance use programs and the expected impact on outcomes for the tens of millions of Americans with behavioral health conditions. The well-being and lives of individuals, families, and entire communities depend on HHS's ability to lead and make progress toward clearly defined goals that support a healthy America.

The following organizations joined this statement:

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Inseparable

Legal Action Center (LAC)

Mental Health America (MHA)

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)

The JED Foundation

Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC)

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Know the warning signs of mental illness

