

Frequently Asked Questions about NAMI Standardized Dues

Why create a standard membership dues amount?

- NAMI wants to grow and be visible. To grow, we need to make joining NAMI easy. Until now, it has not been easy to become a NAMI member – every entry point is different and charges a different dues amount.
- Standardized dues simplify all those processes and lay the groundwork for something we have all wanted – a national membership campaign.

What do I need to know about standardized dues?

- The NAMI Board has set the standardized dues at \$35, with the option of an “Open Door” (reduced dues) rate of \$3.
- This new dues rate becomes official July 1, 2012 – but we can all begin to implement it sooner.
- Of the standard \$35 dues, \$10 goes to NAMI, and of the \$3 Open Door dues, \$1 goes to NAMI. The balance will be divided between NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates in that state, based on a mutually-agreed upon split to be used state-wide.

What is the mutually agreed upon split? How will the membership dues be split three ways?

- Any state/local split is acceptable. Historically, NAMI once recommended a \$10/\$10/\$15 split, basically an even, three-way distribution, with the excess going to the NAMI Affiliate. In some states, this may still make sense; in others, some other arrangement may be more appropriate.
- The mutually agreed upon split must be communicated to NAMI. NAMI will use the split amount communicated by your state in the automated membership system to make monthly electronic payments from NAMI to NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates.
- Details of the split in your state should be communicated to susang@nami.org by the State Organization.
- If the current split is not agreeable to all the Affiliates and the State Organization in your state, please contact susang@nami.org for support and models for reaching a mutually agreed upon split.
- States that do not communicate a mutually agreed upon split by December 31, 2011 will have the split for their state set at a default amount. The default amount will be determined by the NAMI Board of Directors at its meeting in early December.
- You can offer your thoughts and ideas on the default amount via this [survey](#), live until Friday, November 4th.

Why \$35?

In a survey of NAMI Affiliates conducted in the spring of 2011, most respondents were charging \$35 for membership. When NAMI established e-Join (the capacity for an individual to join NAMI online, using a credit card), the average dues amount being charged across the country was \$35, so NAMI selected that amount as the dues amount for those joining via e-Join. Since then, more than 25,000 people have joined NAMI at that rate.

In selecting a standard dues rate for the coming five years, the NAMI Board chose to go with what is already most common practice. Similarly, \$3 is the most common Open Door dues rate – so the Board continued that amount as well.

How will the “Open Door” dues work now?

NAMI, NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates are required to offer a reduced dues rate, called Open Door, for members with limited financial resources. Open Door members enjoy all the same rights and privileges of regular membership, they just pay less. The NAMI Board has set the Open Door dues rate at \$3, of which \$1 comes to NAMI and the balance is split between the member’s NAMI State Organization and NAMI Affiliate.

Open Door membership is not a consumer membership and recipients do not need to prove their need – all they have to do is ask. Although the Open Door dues rate is universally available, it will not be offered online. Individuals wishing to secure the Open Door dues rate may submit membership via a local NAMI Affiliate or NAMI State Organization. Open Door dues rate will be included on the standard membership form.

What does it *mean* to be a NAMI member?

NAMI Standards of Excellence have a clear commitment to "a member is a member is a member" -- meaning that anyone who joins the organization at any entry point has joined the organization at all points (local/state/national).

Through standardized dues, we move away from the fractured, separate membership lists of the past that kept our head count low and our structures chaotic. Standardized dues eliminate all specialized membership categories such as associate, professional, student, consumer, etc. -- a person is simply a member. Categories for *supporters/donors* can, and probably should, be established locally, but these are not *member* categories. NAMI can help in establishing strategic supporter categories for use locally and statewide.

How can people become new members of NAMI?

With the new membership system, new members can join NAMI

- Online, signing up in the privacy of their own homes, selecting their NAMI Affiliate from a list of options – much as people can now with E-Join
- Via a NAMI Affiliate, in which case someone at the Affiliate will complete a web-based form on behalf of the individual
- Via a NAMI State Organization, using the same access that NAMI Affiliates will use.

NAMI will be creating a standard membership form for use across the country. This form can be inserted in brochures, newsletters and anywhere else that might attract new members.

Regardless of where or how a member joins, they will pay the standard \$35. Members joining via the Open Door (\$3) option must do so via a NAMI Affiliate or NAMI State Organization. Open Door will not be available as an online option.

How will people renew their membership dues?

Currently, renewals are mainly handled by Affiliates and State Organizations. The new automatic membership system can be modified to allow other models of renewal, including having renewal occur directly from NAMI. Please give us your thoughts and feedback on what should be taken into consideration about renewal processes, and what your preferences would be by responding to this [survey](#), live until Friday, November 4th.

What will happen to E-Join?

Individuals will still have the option of joining NAMI online. The specific system called E-Join will cease to exist after December 2011, but the option to join any NAMI Affiliate via an online system will restart in February 2012 with the new membership data system.

With the new system, NAMI will collect \$10 for members who join online, just like any other member. The balance of the dues (\$25) will be split according to agreements in each state. Payments will be distributed electronically monthly to NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates, according to the split agreed upon in that state. Information about the new member will be shared instantly and simultaneously with the member's NAMI State Organization and NAMI Affiliate.

What becomes of donations?

The new membership data system will launch in February of 2012. The system will be able to handle donations. The NAMI Board of Directors is in the process of making policy decisions that will impact how and when that portion of the system will be implemented. As more information on that becomes available, we will update you.

How and when will the dues be distributed?

For those Affiliates and State Organizations who opt-in to the new system by supplying their bank information by December 31, 2011 to NAMI Member Services, their portion of dues will be distributed directly to their bank accounts on a monthly basis. The new system will launch in February 2012, and the first disbursements will be made one month later. If the system does not record new membership payments for you in that month, you will not receive any money. You will receive money every month that membership payments occur in the system and are linked to your organization.

For those Affiliates and State Organizations who choose not to opt in to the new membership system with their bank information and record payments by other methods, distribution of your portion of the dues amount will continue to happen on a quarterly basis. The appropriate portion will go directly to the State Organization and/or the Affiliate based on the mutually agreed upon split communicated to NAMI.

Please see above for more information on the mutually agreed upon split.

What other strategies will we have for raising money beyond dues?

Some NAMI Affiliate leaders are concerned that they will lose income because of standardized dues. NAMI will provide technical assistance and strategies for replacing any lost revenue – and for adding new revenue by cultivating supporters and donors above and beyond members.

Our first opportunity to explore this will be via a Fundraising and membership webinar on Thursday, November 10th, 3:30 p.m. EST (2:30 Central, 1:30 Mountain, 12:30 Pacific). Please register [here](#).

How can I describe the benefits of membership?

In support of this effort, NAMI is drafting "boiler plate" language we can all use in our publications to describe the benefits of membership. Below is our first draft, and we welcome your feedback and suggestions in making it the best description of the value conveyed through NAMI membership. Please respond to this [survey](#), live until Friday November 4th, or send your comments and suggestions to susang@nami.org.

"Support NAMI By Becoming a Member!

Become a NAMI member today and add your name to the list of thousands raising their voices to demand services, support and respect for the millions affected by mental illness. NAMI membership demonstrates your support for the important work being done at NAMI and helps us make our voice heard in your community and the nation's capital.

Members receive NAMI's national news magazine, the Advocate, in addition to local and state newsletters. Members also enjoy reduced costs at conventions, the NAMI Store, and other events, as well as voting privileges to shape the future of America's largest grassroots organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions affected by mental illness.

Your membership counts!"