



## **2020 Legislative Action Agenda**

### **Address Suicide by Passing Nicole's Law S.6629**

Suicide is the most unique public-health epidemic due to the multiple root causes which create many challenges to addressing and prevention. The staggering numbers speak to these challenges. Suicide is the only leading cause of death in America whose rates continue to increase. The recent report released by Governor Cuomo's Suicide Prevention Task Force details how the rates of suicide in New York State are actually outpacing this disturbing national trend, with state suicide rates increasing 29.1% from 1999 to 2016.

**S.6629, Nicole's Law has the power to advance suicide prevention by reforming hospital procedures involving the most vulnerable patients who have multiple episodes of self-inflicted life-threatening injuries** (classified as a suicide-attempt, drug-overdose or self-injury). Nicole's Law would hold hospitals accountable in delivering person-centered treatment for people with multiple episodes of self-inflicted life-threatening injuries, providing their families and caretakers with resources and direct much needed improvement in discharging patients.

**Nicole's Law would create a red flag practice for vulnerable patients who need more specialized, intensive and potentially life-saving supports.** If a family member or caretaker informs the care providers that their loved one has had multiple incidents of self-inflicted life-threatening injuries, the provider must obtain the previous hospital records to verify the episode(s) and examine what precise treatment the patient previously received to ensure not to repeat practices which failed the patient leading to another episode of self-inflicted life-threatening injury.

**Nicole's Law demonstrates the value of family insights** when it comes to people with serious mental illness by ensuring that in these cases all attempts would be made to talk to families and receive their insights on the person's mental health history and their views on what did not work in previous treatment settings. **Seeking family insight would not violate HIPAA laws**, as under the law medical professionals are already required to listen to families; Nicole's Law would simply encourage the underused resource of family insight.

**Nicole's Law would also require enhanced discharge planning**, including providing families and caretakers with resources on how to care and monitor someone with a tendency towards self-inflicted life-threatening injuries. Families would have to receive 48 hours' notice prior to a discharge; this would provide families with the ability to both meet with the staff to discuss an integration strategy as well as remove potentially dangerous elements from the home. Before being discharged the individual would have a detailed meeting (which would ideally include their families) to ensure they understand what is needed to recover. They would also be connected to a community-based service provider, receive priority to access services and receive a case-worker to monitor the progress for a specified time-period.

**NAMI-NYS also fully supports bill S.6597**, which seeks to provide oversight to suicide prevention programs to ensure the best possible outcomes for those at risk for suicide.