

**NAMI\* Northside Atlanta (NNA)**  
**-The Silver Lining Project-**

**Background**

A 1963 Kennedy Presidential Commission Report called for the elimination of the mental health hospital system to be replaced by community based services. Unfortunately, fifty years later what seems to have happened is the hospitals have been closed but significant funding has not found its way into community mental health services. *The Silver Lining Project* is our effort to improve this situation.

**Today's Environment**

NAMI Northside Atlanta(NNA) [www.naminorthsideatlanta.org](http://www.naminorthsideatlanta.org) sees a need for substantially improved support for Serious Mental Illness (SMI) in our geography. All those with SMI need lifetime advocacy and support which ranges from a high during crisis intervention to a potential low during ongoing maintenance. In all cases professional care management and social support provide the best chance for a high level of recovery and personal life fulfillment. There are a myriad of organizations and agencies that may play a role in treatment; sort of like puzzle pieces that no one knows how to assemble. The family, when available, often becomes the backbone of filtering support alternatives and providing significant financial support. In many cases those with SMI experience intensive focus and "recover" enough to return to society. Depending on the severity of illness, and treatment quality and duration, many struggle through an erratic lifetime that may include jail, hospitalization and homelessness.

**Major Solution Components**

Among the many puzzle pieces there are four key areas which, when combined, go a long way toward providing comprehensive lifetime care at the level required by each individual.

- ACT** (Assertive Community Treatment) Teams
- Clubhouse**-create a community facility that provides a balanced social and structured setting
- Housing**- identify and create a variety of housing solutions
- PLAN**- Planned Lifetime Assistance Network

There is hope! The models noted above are individually successful but few communities have fully integrated them to create a total solution. Our goal is to define and implement a multiyear project that provides short term results while seeking a total solution- *The Silver Lining*.

**Getting Started**

Our starting point will be to understand the four areas above and several other agencies and services (e.g. CIT) will be considered. Act Teams consist of psychiatrists, nurses, social workers and rehabilitation specialists (including substance abuse) and are mobile. They have been widely implemented in the U.S. and are supported by several cost justification and SMI client success studies. Georgia recently reported 22 teams, 3 of which are at Grady Hospital. PLAN, while small, has affiliates in many states and provides multiple fee based services. More housing is an ever present requirement. One or more clubhouses in the NNA geography would provide a friendly and secure place to go.

**Action**

Initially we will form a team to define requirements and investigate alternatives. Over time we will seek funding support and implement a work plan with both short and long term objectives.

**Vision and Goals**

The "*Silver Lining*" is our vision. In business terms we will set specific goals and then seek "best practices" solutions that meet our community needs.

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\*NAMI-National Alliance on Mental Illness