

## Program Curriculum

- Class 1: Introduction to Family Education**  
Special features of the course; learning about the normative stages of our emotional reactions to the challenges presented by mental health conditions in the family; the belief system and principles on which NAMI are programs are based; recognizing that mental health conditions are fundamentally biological disorders; addressing the challenges presented by the stigma around symptoms, specifically in military and Veteran culture.
- Class 2: The Biology of Mental Health Conditions and Getting a Diagnosis**  
Overview of development and functions of key brain areas; research on functional and structural brain changes related to mental health conditions and brain injury; overview of the diagnostic process; critical periods in developing a brain disorder and symptom management; strategies in development of a Crisis File and sharing participant personal stories.
- Class 3: Understanding Trauma and Overview of Diagnoses**  
Discussion of trauma from the perspective of the general public, then specifically about various types of trauma experienced by military personnel and their families; emphasize a picture of normal reactions to abnormal events and normalizing the fact that there is always some level of residue associated with exposure to trauma; overview of the types and subtypes of some of the major mental health conditions including mood episodes and mood disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, co-occurring brain disorder and addictive disorders.
- Class 4: Treatment Systems and Services**  
Overview of the systems that may be involved in the Service Member's treatment including the U.S. Department of Defense Military Health System, the VA's Veterans Health Administration and the civilian mental healthcare systems; overview of different types of mental health service providers; overview of different types of therapy and treatment, including medications; emphasis on the importance of working collaboratively (the Service Member or Veteran, the healthcare provider and the family) to achieve the best outcomes; suggestions and tips for communicating with the healthcare provider and the importance of advocating for the needs of the Service Member or Veteran and the family.
- Class 5: Crisis Preparation and Communication Skills**  
Acknowledge the impact of mental health conditions on each family member and the Service Member; learning to separate the symptoms and behavior from the individual; loving the person behind the disorder; learning various skills that can be used to improve day to day communications within the family as well as during episodes of crisis; communication skills, problem solving skills, tips for handling challenging behavior, crisis preparation and response, developing a relapse plan.
- Class 6: Family Roles, Recovery and Self-Care**  
The unique challenges of various family roles (spouse/partner vs. parent vs. sibling, etc.); the importance of self-care in being an effective family caregiver; discussion of any unresolved needs of participants; emphasize building an advocacy team for the Service Member; invitation to join NAMI in the fight to end discrimination and ensure access to appropriate treatment services; evaluations and certificates.