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**ARIZONA GETS “D+” GRADE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM;
STATE COMMENDED FOR BEST PRACTICES COMMITTEE**
National Average is “D”

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) announced today that the nation’s mental health care system earned a national average grade of “D” in the first state-by-state analysis in more than 15 years.

Arizona received an overall grade of D+, although the state was lauded for innovations in best practices and making services more accessible through language translation services.

According to *Grading the States: A Report on America’s Health Care System for Serious Mental Illnesses*, released by NAMI National in Washington, D.C. today, five states received grades in the “B” range, 17 states and the District of Columbia received “C” ratings, 19 states received “D”, and eight states received “F” ratings. Two states, Colorado and New York, declined to respond to an October- November 2005 survey on which the report is based.

“The mental health care delivery system nationwide is broken,” said Cheryl Weiner, NAMI Arizona Executive Director. “The grade in Arizona reflects that break in this state. However, since the appointment by Governor Napolitano of Sue Gerard as Director of Health Services and Eddy Broadway as Deputy Director of Behavioral Services, we have seen strong progress toward improving the system and the delivery of care to those in our state with mental illness.

“Nevertheless, we all agree that there is still have a long way to go,” Weiner said.

Grades were based on 39 criteria in four categories. Arizona received a “B+” for Recovery Supports, “B-” for Infrastructure, “D” for Services, and “D-” for Information Accessibility. Infrastructure represents the state’s forward-looking orientation based on priorities, innovations, data collection and planning.

The report commended Arizona for **2** innovations:

- Best-practice committee with consumer and family involvement
- Language translation services

“Urgent needs” identified for Arizona in the report include:

- Findings and corrective actions in *Arnold v. Sarn* should be applied to all Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs) where applicable
- Better hospital and transitional services
- Housing
- Resources to match population growth

In a unique feature through which NAMI members tested access to basic information through the state mental health department’s Web site and telephone system, Arizona scored 6 out of a possible 10 points, ranking 23rd in the nation.

“Don’t think for one moment that D is okay because it’s above the average,” Weiner said. “On its face, the rating is appalling. Today’s D is a baseline to help measure future progress. We need to start building a mental health care system based on proven, cost-effective practices and the goal of recovery. That’s what people with serious mental illnesses deserve. That’s what taxpayers deserve.”

For a full copy of the report, including state narratives, see **www.nami.org/grades**.

“The report helps identify areas that need work and provides a checklist for change,” Weiner said. “There is a commitment from the Governor, Ms. Gerard and Mr. Broadway towards achieving a statewide recovery model of care, including family and consumers in their care plans, and providing all the many needed services to those with illnesses. ”

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