FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Megan Fazekas-King, mfazekas-king@naminc.org, 919-788-0801

Statewide Crisis Intervention Team Conference bridges the gap between law enforcement and mental health in order to effectively serve those in crisis

RALEIGH, NC (February 5, 2015) – The National Alliance on Mental Illness North Carolina (NAMI NC) will be holding the 2015 Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Conference on February 10, 2015. The conference will take place at the Jane S. McKimmon Center in Raleigh from 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. NC Department of Public Safety Secretary Frank Perry and NC Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Aldona Wos will be in attendance.

Over 500 attendees, including law enforcement professionals, will be attending from throughout the state. The theme of the event, “Our Time is Now: Building the Bridge Together,” highlights the importance of bridging the space between law enforcement and mental health to more effectively serve those experiencing a crisis.

The Statewide CIT Conference is part of the national CIT jail diversion program aimed at teaching law enforcement to identify—and effectively and compassionately respond to—police situations involving people in a mental health crisis. The conference will provide opportunities for collaborations that move us toward common goals of safety, understanding and services to those with mental illness in crisis.

“Police are often the first-line responders when someone experiences a psychiatric crisis and displays symptoms of their illness,” said Jack Register, MSW, Executive Director of NAMI NC. “That’s why it’s important for law enforcement to recognize the signs of mental illness in order to avoid unnecessary arrests or costly emergency services.

“Once incarcerated, people with mental illnesses often do not receive the treatments and services they need, are vulnerable to abuse, and have difficulty reconnecting with services on release. For many, the result is years of cycling through the criminal justice system—which is costly for communities, a burden on police and corrections officers, and tragic for people with mental illnesses and their families.”

Sheriff Sam Page, a leader in CIT growth in North Carolina, will be providing the Keynote address. In 1998 he was elected Sheriff of Rockingham County, and has 30 plus years of experience in law enforcement. Sheriff Page is responsible for the rewrite of the Basic Law Enforcement Training Curriculum in 2012 that emphasizes de-escalation and positive strategies.
The conference is made possible through funding from the Governor’s Crime Commission. Planning was done in coordination with the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services.

For more than 30 years, NAMI North Carolina has provided free support groups, education programs, and advocacy efforts throughout North Carolina. NAMI NC is the state’s largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to promoting recovery and optimizing the quality of life for those living with mental illness. Founded in 1984, NAMI NC has become North Carolina’s voice on mental illness, serving 34 local affiliates across North Carolina, who join together to meet the NAMI mission. For more information on programs, our advocacy efforts and the 34 affiliate organizations in North Carolina, visit our website at www.naminc.org

# # #