



# Free class offers help for those supporting loved ones with mental illness

Published: Tuesday, February 20th 2018, 6:55 pm CST

Updated: Tuesday, February 20th 2018, 7:13 pm CST

By **Melanie Posey, Reporter** [CONNECT](#)

SHELBY COUNTY, AL (WBRC) - It's a staggering statistic: One in every five Americans has a family member or friend with a mental illness or suffers a mental illness themselves.

Mental health experts warn Alabama is not providing enough resources to help.

Experts in the mental health field say there aren't enough resources to help.

And that is where one Shelby County organization is stepping in.

"There is hope. They're not in this alone," says Joan Elder. She's the board president for NAMI, with the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

That message of hope is just one of the messages those who attend the Family to Family course will receive.

The 12-week class is for those who are supporting loved ones who are battling illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

Elder says many times those who come are in search of answers. "They come in, often in crisis, they don't know what to do, where to find resources and this class teaches them about medicines, how to deal with their loved ones, how to take care of themselves," Elder said.

The cost of the course is free. "We don't want the cost, no matter what the socioeconomic level to stop them from taking the course," said Elder.

"I think sometimes we keep things we feel like are going to be shamed--we keep those things silent where there can be great hope and support," says Carole Smith.

She knows how it feels to need help. She remembers dealing with troubled son when he was a teen and relying on strong support systems.

It's a similar support she says the NAMI classes offer and she's recommended it to others.

"It gives me hope that there's a place for families can go to find an answer to not feel like they're alone in this," said Smith.

The Family to Family classes start Monday, March 5 and will be held in the Physician Center on the Shelby Baptist campus on Highway 119.

You can go to [namishelby.org](http://namishelby.org) to learn more and register.

You can also call Laura at 205-267-2986 or email her at [laurajnh@gmail.com](mailto:laurajnh@gmail.com), or call Sherryl at 205-305-0782 or email her at [sherryltreslar.nami@gmail.com](mailto:sherryltreslar.nami@gmail.com).

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