



COUNTY OF YOLO  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** June 14, 2018

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**Steps to Success presents NAMI “In Our Own Voice” speaker series**

(Woodland, CA) – June 14, 2018 - The Yolo County District Attorney’s Neighborhood Court program, in partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA), will be hosting presentations of the NAMI: “In Our Own Voice” speaker series. The presentations will be accompanied by a brief introduction of the new Steps to Success (S2S) program.

NAMI promotes “In Our Own Voice” as a program designed to “change attitudes, assumptions, and stereotypes about people with mental health conditions. These presentations provide a personal perspective of mental illness, as presenters with lived experience talk openly about what it's like to live with a mental health condition. Trained presenters humanize the misunderstood, highly stigmatized topic of mental illness by showing that it's possible—and common—to live well with a mental health condition.”

"This kind of direct, personal interaction with people who are recovering from mental illnesses is the best way to shine the light of hope and overcome prejudice," says NAMI President June Forbes. It is vital to the success of the S2S program that volunteers have access to training and informational resources related to mental health and substance misuse issues. In addition to “In Our Own Voice,” the Yolo County District Attorney, HHSA, and partner agencies: CommuniCare, Empower Yolo, and Legal Services of Northern California, will also be hosting a variety of similar supplemental training opportunities throughout the coming months.

The Director of Yolo County’s Health and Human Services Agency, Karen Larsen, stated, “I have found over the years that the best way to combat stigma around any issue

is to put people in a room together and listen to each other's experiences. We are lucky to have this opportunity in Yolo County."

Steps to Success is a misdemeanor diversion program that began operating in May, 2018. It is intended to advance recovery and reduce recidivism for those in the criminal justice system with a history of mental health and/or substance use disorders. One unique aspect of this program is the Officer Assisted Referral (OAR) where the officers when arresting these individuals will engage with them to determine whether they want help with their mental illness and/or substance use disorder. If they want to work on changing their circumstances they will go through an expedited referral process and subsequently connect with services.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig noted that over the past few years he has seen his prosecutors really focus in on the mental health issues in cases sent to this office. "With Mental Health Court and our new Steps to Success program, we have increased our engagement with people who have mental illnesses," said Reisig. "Our prosecutors must have understanding and empathy to address these issues and work with people who suffer from mental illness. Hearing directly from someone living with mental illness is a huge step in the right direction."

These presentations are open to the public and will be offered in Woodland, West Sacramento, and Davis, and included as part of the training curriculum for S2S volunteers (See dates below).

"In Our Own Voice"

Wed June 20, 6:30-8:30 at the Davis Police Department, Community Room, 2600 5th St

Tues June 26, 6:30-8:30 at Gonzales Bldg #167, 25 N. Cottonwood, Woodland

Thurs June 28, 6:30-8:30 at the W. Sacramento Community Center, 1075 W Capitol Ave

All presentations are open to the public. Your attendance is encouraged. For additional information please visit [www.yoloda.org/nc](http://www.yoloda.org/nc) or contact Volunteer Coordinator, Nicole Kirkaldy, at [Nicole.Kirkaldy@yolocounty.org](mailto:Nicole.Kirkaldy@yolocounty.org) or 530.666.8378.

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