

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Cecelia Hartley](#)  
**Subject:** FW: NorthSTAR  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 15, 2014 5:17:33 PM

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**From:** Doris Nissley  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 15, 2014 3:29 PM  
**To:** Sunset Advisory Commission  
**Subject:** NorthSTAR

Just to let you know that I wholly support the NorthSTAR program in Collin County. Doris Nissley,  
Secretary for NAMI of Collin County

OCT 17 2014



## NAMI Collin County

An affiliate of NAMI Texas and NAMI, 'The National Alliance on Mental Illness'  
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October 14, 2014

Mr. Ken Levine  
Director, Sunset Advisory Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mr. Levine:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Collin County (NAMICCO), I am writing to relay our concerns about the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report, Health and Human Services Commission and System Issues, October 2014. Our membership, which largely consists of persons using NorthSTAR services and their families, has expressed grave concerns about the staff recommendation to discontinue the NorthSTAR program. NorthSTAR serves our membership very well and any chance that it may be discontinued causes extreme anxiety and concern.

Prior to NorthSTAR, many persons in our area who did not have Medicaid could not access services, or could not access adequate services. We hear from our family members and friends in the rest of the state that this situation still exists outside of NorthSTAR. It was somewhat alleviated by the wait list funding allotted in the last legislative session, but the wait list has started to grow again. With circa 1200 people moving to Texas daily, that list will undoubtedly continue to grow.

Our ability to have stakeholder input into the evolution of NorthSTAR is unprecedented in the state. Each North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NTBHA) meeting is attended by forty to fifty persons representing the entire stakeholder community, including persons living with mental illness, their family members, providers, government officials, law enforcement, and others. These meetings allow open flow of dialogue between those in the audience and the Board. This is unequalled in the state and results in changes in NorthSTAR being made by consensus of the stakeholder community. The contractor for NorthSTAR, ValueOptions, is viewed as part of the community and has always been open, accessible, and responsive to community input. Our experience with the STAR and STAR-plus and CHIP plans does not echo that open exchange of ideas and response to community input.

A large majority of the serious and persistently mentally ill (SPMI) adults served by NorthSTAR do not have Medicaid and would be seriously impacted by the change in

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systems that are recommended in this report. That is of utmost concern to our membership.

Prior to this report, our community had already begun discussing and planning for needed updates and structural changes to NorthSTAR, both within the community and with DSHS and HHSC, that will solve the issue of not being able to participate in the 1115 waiver fully, and also will enhance integration of other healthcare services with behavioral healthcare. NAMI Collin County is requesting that the Commission reject the staff recommendation to discontinue NorthSTAR and allow the NorthSTAR community to continue to work to evolve a model that has shown unparalleled success in treating more people with open access, choice of providers, and the efficiencies that competition and flexibility have provided.

Please do not throw the baby out with the bathwater! NorthSTAR has been a remarkably successful model in both serving more persons and containing costs. Your decisions affect lives; implementing this recommendation would be disastrous for thousands of persons who currently have the hope of recovery in North Texas.

Yours truly,

Doris Nissley  
Secretary NAMICCO