

Calls for politicians to consider mental health and addiction issues

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Substance abuse and mental health have rarely come up on the campaign trail, but now, Barack Obama and John McCain have a reason to listen. NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, is partnering with over forty leading addiction and mental health organizations to promote a shared policy agenda during the 2008 presidential election.

The historic coalition, called the Whole Health Campaign, is urging both the Republican and Democratic parties to adopt the following three policy statements in their platforms:

- Ensure equitable and adequate mental health and addiction treatment coverage in all public and private health care plans.

- Support policies that promote individual and family recovery from mental illnesses and addictions as integral to overall health.
- Commit to investing in America's future through prevention, early intervention, and research on mental illnesses and addictions.

The Whole Health Campaign will also be hosting "recovery and wellness rooms" at each party's convention (where twelve-step meetings will be held), building relationships with advisors from each campaign and preparing a "to-do" list for the incoming administration. It is also hosting an online petition, available at <http://www.jointogether.org/wholehealthcampaign>.

This effort marks the first time that addiction and mental health organizations have coordinated their public policy efforts surrounding a presidential campaign.

Daniel Guarnera, NAADAC-NAATP Government Relations Liaison, says, "The Whole Health Campaign has helped addiction and mental health groups agree on a united, simple message to the next administration. If we're not on the agenda early in the health care reform process, we won't be at the table at all. This effort will make us well-positioned for any health reform discussions in the new administration."

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NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals, is the largest organization for addiction-focused health care professionals. Founded in 1974, NAADAC is committed to the professional development of individuals who treat and prevent addiction. NAADAC also works to improve the provision of treatment services through education and advocacy programs. “We help people recover their lives.”