

## Merger Focuses on Strengthening the Voice of Addiction-Focused Professionals

### **For Immediate Release**

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Student assistance professionals have a new home: NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals.

The National Student Assistance Association, a non-profit organization incorporated in the state of Wisconsin in 1987, has agreed to merge with NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals.

“The dedicated skills and attributes of student assistance professionals have a natural fit with NAADAC,” said NAADAC Executive Director Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CCDC III, SAP.

“The inclusion of prevention and intervention makes NAADAC, and the addiction profession, more comprehensive, inclusive and stronger.”

### **Background on Student Assistance Professionals**

Student assistance professionals provide an integrated system of care including prevention, early intervention and support services that address mental health and substance use issues that would otherwise result in barriers to student learning and success. Student assistance programs (SAPs) evolved from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) model of the 1960s-1970s. Student assistance programs were initially designed to address substance abuse in students. Changes in SAP services evolved over the next 30 years to focus on addressing barriers to learning, including substance use, mental health issues and violence, as well as a host of other individual and environmental problems. Ultimately the goal of student assistance programs is to help students to succeed academically and to complete their education.

## **Merger Benefits**

A number of benefits of merger were identified during conversations between NSAA and NAADAC:

1. NSAA brings an expertise in adolescent substance abuse prevention and early intervention to complement the existing education initiatives of NAADAC.
2. Consolidating the efforts of both organizations provides more of a voice for the issues NSAA and NAADAC are focused on.
3. More effective advocacy for student assistance programs are possible by incorporating action and initiatives into the NAADAC government relations program.
4. While there are currently no paid members of NSAA, NAADAC plans to re-engage the former members of NSAA and provide them with meaningful benefits.
5. Capitalizing on NSAA strengths at the state level could further bolster regional affiliations.
6. The expertise that the NSAA brings on student assistance professional credentialing and certification will assist in the development of programs and products that address this specialization.

Over its history NSAA has represented the interests of student assistance professionals across the United States and is known for a history of advocating for cutting edge school reform and prevention and intervention services for youth and families.

While the NSAA membership peaked at more than 3,000, changes in the economy and policy-making also affected the organization and in 2008, NSAA was forced to close its Washington, DC-area office and lay off staff. Until the merger, the NSAA was relying on an all-volunteer Board of Directors to support its advocacy activities and program efforts.

## **Merger Structure**

Given the recognition NSAA has in the student assistance field, a new committee will be formed to capitalize on the expertise of the current NSAA Board of Directors. Training, a student assistance professionals track at NAADAC annual conference and the development of written materials focusing on the issue student assistance are all planned for 2012.

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.*