

Bill includes \$100,000 for NAADAC to cover the initial costs of launching the Ohio Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Workforce Resource Center

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This week, the House of Representatives approved the omnibus spending bill funding most federal agencies for the current fiscal year, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, which includes \$100,000 for NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals, to cover the initial costs of launching the Ohio Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Workforce Resource Center. This funding, which is allocated within the budget for the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency, was requested by several members of the Ohio Congressional delegation and will serve numerous Ohio communities.

The Center could address the recruitment, retention, training, and career advancement of Ohio alcohol and other drug treatment and prevention professionals by: (1) developing Internet-based career development resources, including continuing education and training programs; and (2) holding educational events on these issues in Ohio.

Rather than bricks and mortar, the Center will initially have a virtual base. The Center will also include a network of addiction-focused Ohio organizations that NAADAC will actively engage. The Center is designed to serve as a national model and could be replicated in other States if it is successful.

The federal appropriation was sought by NAADAC in conjunction with its Ohio affiliate -- the Ohio Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors -- and the Ohio Council on Behavioral Health Care Providers. Congressional support came from Senator George Voinovich, Senator Mike DeWine (who chairs the Senate Subcommittee on Substance Abuse and Mental Health), Congressman Ralph Regula (who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and Congressman David Hobson. Key support also came from Ohio First Lady Hope Taft, who is a trained AOD professional, and from the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.

NAADAC officials are pleased that the project is garnering bicameral and bipartisan support.

"Ohio is well-positioned to play a leadership role in developing new ways to recruit, train, and retain addiction professionals, given the strong state organizations, the leadership of Ohio's First Lady Hope Taft, and the Congressional delegation, which has demonstrated its ability to find critical resources in a challenging budgetary environment," said NAADAC Executive Director Pat Ford-Roegner.

"Addiction is one of America's most widespread and vexing diseases," added Ford-Roegner. "It's in all of our communities' interest to cultivate a sufficient pool of talented addiction professionals and equip them with the skills to continue to provide effective care. We should also recognize the hard work and dedication of the thousands of addiction professionals who practice in high-stress and under-resourced situations."

The median age of AOD professionals is increasing rapidly, while the turnover rate among substance abuse treatment professionals is considerably higher than in other professions. Accordingly, in Ohio and elsewhere, there is a need to focus on workforce development within the AOD profession.

Senate consideration of the Consolidated Appropriations Act is anticipated to begin around January 20, when Congress reconvenes.

This Center represents NAADAC's first-ever legislative earmark.

Last year, NAADAC successfully lobbied SAMHSA to include workforce development as a cross-cutting principle in the agency's priorities matrix. (See www.samhsa.gov/about/) NAADAC also tracks workforce development trends through its Practitioner Services Network surveys, which are funded by SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.