

The Issue

Given the onset of retirement for many baby boomers, it has become increasingly apparent that the Addiction Professional shortage will only worsen. Overall programmatic reforms are necessary but so are several key initiatives that seek to enhance education, recruitment, retention, and clinical training.

It is crucial that Addiction Professionals solidify their place in the Public Health continuum by becoming more active on issues such as the augmentation of funding for the National Health Service Corps.

Assessing this from the federal perspective, this can be achieved by fostering relations with two key subsidiaries of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These entities are the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), the agency overseeing behavioral health initiatives, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which are charged with increasing access to health care for those who are medically underserved.

HRSA

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is the principal Federal Agency. HRSA's programmatic portfolio includes a range of programs or initiatives designed to increase access to care, improve quality, and safeguard the health and well being of the Nation's most vulnerable populations.

Possible Legislative Action on Workforce Development Initiatives

NAADAC will continue to seek various ways to further integrate with the public health community. One of those avenues is to play an active role in the reauthorization of the Health Professions Act, which currently houses the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). Twenty-two thousand health professionals have served with the Corps since its inception in 1972 and have benefited from its scholarship and loan forgiveness programs. Throughout the past 32 years though, Addiction Professionals have not played a prominent role in the Corps.

NAADAC will work to improve the overall appropriation for the NHSC. In addition, NAADAC will advocate for the creation of a behavioral health banner under the NHSC, which will include

Addiction Professionals and advocate additional funding for those who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addictive disorders.

The NHSC is one of the most effective training grounds in the public health workforce. It has demonstrated that it is committed to improving the health of the nation's underserved by recruiting and retaining health professionals to practice in underserved areas. Moreover, the NHSC could be a useful training ground for new recruits in the addictions field as it strives to prepare and support dedicated students and clinicians through scholarship and loan repayment programs.

NAADAC will continue to partner with other entities in establishing demonstration projects nationwide that will develop pathways for the education, recruitment, retention, clinical training, and advancement of professionals who specialize in addictive disorders.