

Meet Your 2019-2021 Southwest Regional Vice President: Thomas P. Gorham, LMFT, CDC II

By Kristin Hamilton, JD, NAADAC Director of Communications



Thomas P. Gorham, LMFT, CADC II, has been a member of NAADAC since 2001. He has participated as both a speaker and attendee at the Advocacy in Action Conferences and NAADAC Annual Conferences over the past several years. Gorham was a founding member of Addiction Professional Association of California (APAC), NAADAC's California affiliate. Gorham has a rich personal history of homelessness and incarceration that allows him to clearly

see the needs of specialized populations. Before becoming the Program Director of Options Recovery, a large non-profit treatment facility, he was the Clinical Director, which qualifies him both in the business and treatment aspects of the substance use disorder field. Gorham believe NAADAC needs to continue to lead the way in the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders. He believes that NAADAC needs to support, expand, and train the addiction workforce to meet the demands of the Affordable Care Act.

Q: What inspired you to go into the addiction profession?

A: What inspired me to get into the field in the first place was my own life changing experience in the treatment program at Options Recovery Services, where I am now the Executive Director. I had been homeless on the streets of Oakland and Berkeley, California, for over ten years. I wanted to help all of those that I left behind on the street. I wanted them to experience the miracle that I did or to at least have that chance.

Options was a fledgling non-profit when I was a client, run by Dr. Davida Coady and her band of volunteers. They needed help so I went back to college at 50 years old and got certified. Because of the Options mission to take all comers regardless of their ability to pay, I knew that I needed to continue my education to meet the needs of our co-occurring disordered clients, so I stayed in school and received a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree, and eventually got licensed as a Marriage & Family Therapist.

Q: What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing new addiction counselors in your region today, and do you have any advice for overcoming these challenges?

A: I feel that there are several challenges facing our new counselors today, but there are more opportunities also. Our whole playing field had a major change with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2014 that mandated insurance for the treatment of substance use disorders. Demand for qualified counselors is increasing rapidly. With that demand comes better wages, but at a price. Documentation, computer skills, and treatment based on science are absolutely essential now. The days of



glorified sponsors are gone. Like I told a student earlier: if you don't have a degree, get one. If you do have one, get another one.

Q: What goals do you hope to accomplish during your time as RVP?

A: I became the Southwest Regional Vice President last year and I had been leading the California affiliate for the better part of ten years. Unifying addiction professionals has always been my goal; giving them a voice is always my first order of business. Organizing seven or eight states and getting them on the same page is the challenge. My advice is to get involved. There is power in numbers and our profession needs to be united now more than ever. My advice is to work together to solve the challenges facing us. My goals are always to find ways to improve the environment that I am in and leave it in a better place when I leave. Hopefully, along with my constituents, we can improve our workforce and help solve the social ills caused by addiction.

Q: What are your hopes for the future of NAADAC and its members? What are your hopes for the future of the addiction profession?

A: My hopes for the future of NAADAC and our membership is that we can make a bigger difference. I hope that we can take treatment to a higher level. We are in a time when legalization of various drugs is going to create an even greater need and NAADAC must lead the way. Our members must raise the bar and be ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with the medical and mental health professions. We have been deemed essential workers and need to be up to the tasks that face us. Keep up the good work folks. You are appreciated!



Kristin Hamilton, JD, is the Director of Communications for NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. She works on NAADAC public relations, communications, and digital media, including the NAADAC website and social media, is editor of NAADAC's two ePublications, the bi-weekly Addiction & Recovery eNews and weekly Professional eUpdate, and is the managing editor for NAADAC's magazine, Advances in Addiction and Recovery. She also contributes to the planning, organization, and administration of communication campaigns, administers the PhD Candidate Survey Program, and serves as the affiliate liaison for the Communications Department.