

Announcing the NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors

by Shafiq Qureshi, MD, NMFP-AC Program Manager



NMFP-AC NAADAC MINORITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR ADDICTION COUNSELORS

The Now is the Time: Minority Fellowship Program for Addictions Counselors (NITT-MFP-AC) for Master's Level students is a \$3.2 million federally funded program administered by NAADAC in conjunction with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). The NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors (NMFP-AC) aims to increase the number of culturally-competent Master's Level addiction counselors available to serve underserved and minority populations, and transition age youth (ages 16–25) by providing a tuition stipend of up to \$20,000, training, education, and professional guidance to at least 30 students in the final year of an accredited Master's program in addiction/substance use disorder counseling per year for four years.

Program History

The specialized profession of substance use disorder treatment focuses on understanding and treating both acute and chronic substance use disorders (SUDs). Such addiction disorders vary in their roots, severity, complexity, duration, and outcome, and therefore require advanced and specialized training, skilled differential diagnosis, and highly individualized approaches to service planning and delivery. Addiction practitioners are trained to distinguish addiction disease from the bio-psychosocial-spiritual consequences of alcohol and other drug use and understand the importance of conveying hope to individuals and families in addition to practical treatment. There is a critical need for a larger, more culturally-diverse community of well-trained addiction professionals and it is essential to recruit more professionals who are better aligned culturally with at-risk populations.

There is a lack of human infrastructure to support the current demand for treatment and recovery. Specifically, this is the manifestation of two issues. One, there is a severe shortage of adequately trained substance use disorders specialists. Two, there is a significant demographic disconnect in which the professionals providing services (i.e. white, female, older professionals) do not reflect the cultural characteristics of a substantial portion of the populations they are serving (i.e. African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asian Americans). Increasing diversity will improve the service engagement experience as well as health outcomes among minority communities. Recruitment is needed not only for more professionals into the addiction profession, but also professionals who are better aligned culturally and are highly trained to help individuals, families, and communities recover.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) has a long history of reaching out to doctoral students through a variety of organizations. NAADAC has worked over the past 20 years to create strong relationships with stakeholders and other resources to help address the need to increase and improve the ability of the addictions workforce serving racially and ethnically diverse populations and transition age youth (ages 16–25), including spending the last eight years working with partner organizations to get the SAMHSA's MFP expanded to include funding for Master's level addiction counselors. After a long period of advocacy and maximum effort, NAADAC was awarded with SAMHSA's Now is the Time: Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors (NITT-MFP-AC) Master's Level Grant and created the NMFP-AC.

As the premier addiction professional membership organization that represents the interests of more than 85,000 addiction counselors, educators, and other addiction-focused health care professionals in the United States, Canada, and abroad, and the general interests of the addiction profession as a whole, NAADAC is thrilled and excited to build this program into its established and longstanding infrastructure created over 40 years of innovation, education, service, and programming.

Program Goal and Benefits

The NMFP-AC's ultimate goal is to reduce health disparities and improve behavioral health care outcomes for diverse populations. This program aims to addressing current challenges in the addictions profession pertaining to human infrastructure development, cultural misalignment between addiction professionals and the populations they serve, and insufficient training of addiction professionals.

NMFP-AC Fellows will be selected through a rigorous application and evaluation process, administered by the NMFP-AC staff and NMFP-AC Advisory Committee. Once selected, the NMFP-AC will award tuition stipends up to \$20,000 per Fellow to at least 30 Fellows for each year of the four-year grant period. Prior to the start of their initial academic terms, NMFP-AC Fellows will be required to attend an orientation webinar for their cohorts to meet the program staff, establish relationships, and receive a detailed overview of program requirements and options, and all of the resources that will be made available to Fellows through NAADAC and its partners.

Advisory Committee

The NMFP-AC Advisory committee was established in 2014 to create policy for administration of the program, support program planning, monitoring, and evaluation, support fellows, and provide education and leadership to the fellows and NMFP-AC staff. The NMFP-AC Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from partner national organizations, including the National Board for Certified Counselors, the Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Association of Recovery

Schools, National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse, the National Association of Lesbian & Gay Addiction Professionals, and the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors. The NMFP-AC Advisory Committee is divided into three different sub-committees: Mentoring; Policy & Procedure; and Applicant Scoring. The Applicants Scoring sub-committee has the vital role of applicant screening and selection. The Mentoring sub-committee assists in mentoring and training, as well as assuring fellows are placed with competent mentors. The role of the Policy & Procedure sub-committee is NMFP-AC policy development, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and program quality improvement. Committee members meet quarterly to discuss the progress of the program, and additional meetings are held as needed.

Application Process

Students can apply for the NMFP-AC Fellowship by filling out the online application which is available on the NMFP-AC webpage at www.naadac.org/nmfp-ac. The application period is open between December and February for the following annual fellowship cohort. Required supporting documents can be uploaded or to be mailed to the NAADAC office. Based on the following eligibility criteria, NMFP-AC Fellows are selected through a rigorous application and evaluation process, administered by the NMFP-AC staff and NMFP-AC Advisory Committee.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or Legal Permanent Residents.
2. Applicants must be eligible for graduation from an accredited Master's program in addiction/substance use disorder counseling or a counseling program that meets CACREP or NASAC standards within 12 months of the tuition stipend award.
3. Applicants must be applying for a tuition stipend only.
4. Applicants must agree to attend online orientation training, and complete six required educational webinars, covering working with transition age youth and cultural competence and effectiveness for working with underserved populations.
5. Applicants must agree to work with a NMFP-AC-provided approved mentor.
6. Applicant must commit to providing at least six months post-fellowship addiction/substance use disorder counseling to underserved populations, defined as minority populations, LGBT populations, and/or transition age youth populations.

NMFP-AC Fellow Requirements & Benefits

Prior to the start of their initial fellowship academic terms, NMFP-AC Fellows are required to attend an orientation webinar for their cohorts to meet the program staff, establish relationships, and receive a detailed overview of program requirements and options, and all of the resources made available to fellows through NAADAC and its partners. In addition, the Fellows will receive individualized guidance through the development of an Individual Fellow Development Plan (IFDP) in conjunction with NMFP-AC. NMFP-AC staff will lay out how fellows fulfill each program requirement using the resources in his/her specific Master's program, goals for additional optional education and training, and goals for post-fellowship employment that meets the program requirements. Fellows receive continued support from NMFP-AC through individual virtual meetings.

During the fellowship term, fellows will be required to complete six webinar trainings; one on working with transition age youth, and five

on cultural humility/competence (e.g. working with Asian American, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender populations.). These webinar trainings will be developed by NAADAC with expert partners specifically for the NMFP-AC program, but will be made available to all addiction professionals on the NAADAC website. In addition, fellows will be encouraged, but not required, to attend additional NAADAC webinars, especially the nine webinar series developed as part of SAMHSA's Recovery to Practice Initiative.

In addition to receiving support from the NMFP-AC staff, each fellow will be matched with a mentor, who has experience and a demonstrated commitment to addiction/substance abuse counseling service to underserved populations, minority populations, and/or transition age youth. Fellows will also receive significant educational and professional development support through a NAADAC student membership during their fellowship year and a NAADAC

professional membership for two years after graduation.

Post-Fellowship Commitments

Both NAADAC and the NMFP-AC are committed to helping fellows find post-graduate placements to fulfill the requirements of the NMFP-AC. Specific individualized Fellow post-graduation goals and paths will be discussed at the initiation of each cohort and documented and tracked by both NMFP-AC staff and mentors in each Fellow's Individualized Fellow Development Plan. NAADAC will promote employment of NMFP-AC Fellows through its various communication channels and will profile each Fellow, including his/her occupational goals and downloadable resume, in the NMFP-AC section of the NAADAC website. In addition, Fellows will have access to NAADAC's Career Center and job database, and NAADAC's network of organizational members and 47 state affiliates. Finally, each fellow will be given a two-year professional membership to NAADAC to aid in their ability to network, obtain free and discounted continuing education hours, work towards their Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) credential, and many other benefits and opportunities.

Spread the Word

While the application deadline for the first cohort of NMFP-AC Fellows passed on March 15, 2015, there will be three more cohorts of NMFP-AC Fellows under the current SAMHSA grant, and NAADAC will be looking for qualified applicants for the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019 school years. Be sure to spread the word!



Shafiq Qureshi, MD, is the Program Manager for the NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors (NMFP-AC). He previously served as the National HIV Project Coordinator with the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), during which time he promoted and monitored the development of an integrated government strategy on a

comprehensive approach towards drug use among Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan and refugees who were returning to Afghanistan. Under the UNODC and U.S. Department of State Bureau for International and Law Enforcement (INL)/Colombo plan partnership, Shafiq was selected as a Master Trainer for the Asian Center for Certification and Education of Addiction Professionals, where he trained addiction professionals in substance use disorder practices and treatment methods. He has also worked for International Relief and Development (IRD) Inc. for USAID grants, and as a HIV/AIDS Trainer and Supervisor with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. Shafiq has a medical degree from Nangarhar Medical Faculty in Afghanistan.



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