

Well, Aren't You Special!

By Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, NAADAC Executive Director

A funny quip used some years ago occurs to me when I think of the positioning of the addiction professional in this changing environment—changes that are due to the Affordable Health Act and the overall paradigm shift viewing addiction as a chronic disease within the medical field. My answer to addiction professionals is, “Yes, you are special”!

Addiction professionals have moved through the years to embrace competencies, skills, and attitudes that are ever changing, concerning the best way to treat substance use disorders and their effect on millions of individuals and families. Our profession has evolved from self-help groups to paraprofessional staff to now professional staff. While once the attainment of an undergraduate degree, or even a two-year Associate’s degree, was sufficient to work in our field, in today’s changing healthcare environment and the integration of helping professionals into medical care, graduate degrees are becoming a necessity.

The direction, of late, is to integrate the treatment of addictive disorders with mental health and medical care. Integration with the other helping professions, however, does not necessitate that substance use disorders be treated by a “generalist.” All helping professions have specialization and addiction is no different. Just as you would not see a cardiologist for a brain tumor, you would not want to engage with members of the helping profession trained in Alzheimers to treat your addictive disorder. Your brain and your heart are in one body; and are related, but you would not stop at one specialist if you had two disparate maladies. Many individuals have co-occurring disorders, or co-morbid psychosocial factors, that may necessitate two treatment modalities. A counselor (MSW, MFT, PC) may be very well trained in other specialties, but persons treating substance use disorders should be specifically trained in addictions. In order to treat substance use disorders effectively, for immediate and long-term care, a person must have specific education, training and clinical supervision in the addictions field. In order to gain the confidence of the public, the medical field, and the payors, those serving and treating substance use disordered individuals and their families must be well trained and have had expert clinical supervision. Not only do professionals need to understand the evidence-based practices used in the treatment and recovery of substance use disorders, they must also understand the insidious ramifications of substance use disorders on the family. Family therapy is vital to addictions treatment and payors have begun to recognize that substance use disorders are a family disease, one that, left untreated, will sprout other behavioral and medical needs for family members.

NAADAC’s Role in Promoting and Securing the Addiction Professional in the Workplace

NAADAC has been working diligently to advocate for the addiction profession and for the role of the addiction professional in the medical care environment. On a national level, NAADAC is working in collaboration with our national organizational partners, SAMHSA, ONDCP,

HRSA, Center for Medicaid Services (CMS), Health and Human Services, NIDA, and NIAAA, as well as Congressional legislators on Capitol Hill to promote the addiction profession. NAADAC is also working with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to recognize and validate the specialty skills required to work in the arena of substance use disorders, and recognize the model scope of practice established and codified by a national addiction Stakeholders group conducted through SAMHSA.

On the state level, NAADAC is working with several affiliates on state licensure bills to recognize addiction counselors along with other licensed professionals. In some states, NAADAC has worked with our state affiliate to safeguard the addiction profession as others have sought to “blend out” substance use disorders into a general behavioral health care system. NAADAC recognizes health care integration and promotes that integration. We also promote trained, educated and credentialed addiction professionals with specific skills, competencies, and attitudes necessary to effectively treat substance use disorders. NAADAC is carrying the banner of the addiction professional. This means recognition and equal access to training and salaries/benefits. There is, and will be, work and meetings conducted with NAADAC’s Public Policy Committee and NAADAC Executive leadership with other groups that will promote and enhance these initiatives. Recently, NAADAC attended a meeting with Secretary Sylvia Burwell of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. At the meeting, NAADAC supported and endorsed several initiatives, including implementation of ACA and Parity Law, care integration and value purchasing, addressing the opioid epidemic, and workforce development for the addiction counselor. In addition, NAADAC has recently attended meetings with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Friends of NIDA, and Friends of NIAAA, ONDCP, SAMHSA, Optum Health, and other partners to promote NAADAC’s Initiatives.

NAADAC Initiatives

NAADAC’s major initiatives to enhance, promote and secure the addiction profession are the following:

National Scope of Practice: This National Scope of Practice, ranging from Recovery Support Specialist to Masters Addiction Counselor, includes another companion scope of practice for co-occurring disorders that was developed by a panel of experts several years ago. The Scope of Practice promotes quality and appropriate care by qualified addiction professionals.

Model Licensure Bill & Advocacy Packet: NAADAC’s Professional Affairs and Practice Standards Committee (PAPSC) lead by Past President, Don Osborn, offers technical assistance and a model licensure bill to state affiliates looking to introduce licensure bills to their state legislatures. For more information on this venture, see Don Osborn’s article on page 20.

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NCCAP National Credentials: NAADAC's National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) offers national credentials based on national standards state to state for each level of the scope of practice. The NCC AP has recently launched the National Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist (NCPRSS) credential that is national in scope and available for states to use with national criteria and a standardized test evidencing basic recovery support knowledge and skill areas. Other credentials include the foundational National Certified Addiction Counselor (NCAC) Level I & II and Master Addiction Counselor (MAC), as well as the Nicotine Dependence Specialist (NDS), National Certified Adolescent Addictions Counselor (NCAAC), the Nationally Endorsed Student Assistance Professional (NESAP), National Clinical Supervision Endorsement (NCSE), and the Nationally Endorsed Co-Occurring Disorders Professional (NECODP).

NASAC: In partnership with the International Coalition for Addiction Studies Education (INCASE), NAADAC continues to support the National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC) in its efforts to create national professional standards and improve and expand accreditation of higher education addiction studies and counseling programs. It is based on the standards set by a stakeholders' panel in addiction curriculum, from the certificate to PhD levels of education. NASAC is growing and gaining recognition in the higher education accreditation world.

Workforce Development: NAADAC's main workforce development initiative is its extensive continuing education (CE) offerings of current evidenced-based methods and therapies through its webinar series, Life Long Learning Series, home study courses, face-to-face trainings, and Annual Conference, to be held in Washington, D.C. from October 9-13, 2015. NAADAC offers "certificate programs" to show mastery of an important topic, including Recovery to Practice, Conflict Resolution in Recovery, Foundations in Addiction Practice, Spiritual Caregivers, as well as offers the necessary education for the U.S. Department of Transportation's national Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) qualification. NAADAC works with SAMHSA and other Federal partners on workforce initiatives that are promoting the specific training of the addiction workforce. NAADAC is proud to announce it has received

a SAMHSA grant to allow for the long-fought-for NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Professionals (NMFC-AC) that will offer 30 students per year for the next four years the opportunity for tuition assistance up to \$20,000 for their final year of a Master's program in addiction counseling. For more information on this program, please visit page 12.

MCO Partnerships: In partnership with Managed Care Organizations, NAADAC is promoting the recognition and payment for substance use disorder services. As stated earlier in this article, NAADAC is working with MCOs to recognize the importance of treatment services for substance use disorders by professionals educated, trained and supervised in addictions treatment.

National Clinical Supervision Task Force: The National Addiction Technology Network and NIATx, along with NASADAD, NAADAC, and other stakeholders in clinical supervision have formed a National Clinical Supervision Task Force to develop national standard recommendations for clinical supervision practice. This task force is working in several sub-committees to develop national recommendations for practice regulations and training.

Working Together to Serve People with Substance Use Disorders and their Families

Ultimately, the goal of the addiction professional is to support the person who has substance use disorders, and their family members, so that they may live a happy and healthy life, reduce the family disruption that often leads to other behavioral and life-long difficulties, and encourage healthier communities. NAADAC is working hard to honor and protect the valuable services you provide. Thanks to all of you who are working in the addiction profession for providing these specialized services! You are Special!



Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, is the Executive Director of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, and has been an addiction professional for over 35 years. Moreno Tuohy is a former Executive Director for the Danya Institute and Project Officer of the Central East Addiction Technology Transfer Center (CEATTC). She has a Bachelor's degree in

Social Work from Washington State University and holds a Certificate in Alcohol/Drug Abuse. Moreno Tuohy has taught throughout the United States, Iceland, Russia, China, New Zealand, Cyprus, Egypt and Australia.