

Advocacy: The Voice for Recovery

By Gerard J. Schmidt, MA, LPC, MAC, NAADAC President

From our initial roots as a professional organization founded through and by those in recovery, NAADAC has always had as a major emphasis of its mission to advocate for those that we treat. We recognized early on that a strong voice is needed not only to advance funding agendas on a federal and state level, but also to work towards raising the standards of care for those who have addictive disorders to the same level of care as any other individual afflicted with a medical illness.

NAADAC is proud of its efforts to amplify the voice of those with have addictive disorders and those who serve people with addictive disorders. Since it was founded in 1972 as the National Association of Alcoholism Counselors and Trainers (NAACT), efforts have included:

- 1972** – The National Association of Alcoholism Counselors in Trainers (NAACT) is founded to address the need for an organized constituency to represent our interests.
- 1977** – NAADAC joins NIAAA on a panel on national credentialing of qualified alcoholism counselors.
- 1978** – NAADAC establishes the National Commission for the Credentialing of Alcoholism Counselors (NCCAC).
- 1982** – NAADAC contributes to the landmark NIAAA-funded report by Birch & Davis defining the work of alcoholism and drug abuse counselors for the first time.
- 1986** – NAADAC hosts its first legislative conference, which includes White House and Congressional Briefings and is attended by First Lady Nancy Regan.
- 1988** – NAADAC creates national credentialing for both alcoholism and drug abuse counselors due to the lack of credentialing for drug counselors.
- 1989** – *Treatment Works!*, later named the National Recovery Month, is launched by NAADAC in alliance with government and private treatment organizations.
- 1992** – NAADAC holds the first Addiction Professionals' Day to commemorate the hard work of addiction counselors.
- 1994** – U.S. Department of Transportation expands its definition of Substance Abuse Profession (SAP) to include those certified by the National Certification Commission.
- 1995** – NAADAC works with the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) to establish the Master Addictions Counselor (MAC) credential.
- 2005** – NAADAC and NCC start work with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to create training and certification programs internationally.
- 2011** – NAADAC and the International Coalition for Addiction Studies Education (INCASE) join to create the National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC) to provide a single standard for higher education addiction studies programs.
- 2014** – SAMHSA awards NAADAC \$3.2 million to start the NAADAC Minority Fellowship Program for Addiction Counselors to provide tuition stipends to Master's degree students focusing on addiction.
- 2016** – NAADAC hosts addiction workforce development forums at colleges across the United States.

2017 – NAADAC's Minority Fellowship Program expands to include behavioral health professionals focusing on addiction.

In 1988, NAADAC formed the NAADAC Public Policy Committee (PPC). The PPC works to raise awareness in Congress on critical funding and policy issues surrounding addiction treatment and its objectives are to:

- establish a legislative agenda that promotes the needs of the addiction professional at the state and national levels;
- develop and distribute relevant position statements, white papers, legislative agenda guides, and other public policy papers for the education and advocacy of addiction focused issues;
- conduct an annual public policy conference and/or workshops that promote, educate and train on the public policy agenda of NAADAC;
- help educate and train at the state level advocacy and legislation that promotes addiction focused issues;
- promote and advocate for public policy issues to relevant governmental and private institutions and organizations; and
- give testimony on the state or national level on relevant public policy issues.

Legislative success was slow in coming, but early pioneers, including Ed Chandler and John Avery, paved the path for those coming after them and helped shape the course and direction for legislation that has led to parity, Block Grant Funding, Minority Fellowship Grants, and the development of state and national certification and licensing standards.

The PPC's latest effort in its commitment to continually engaging the membership in their advocacy role is the development of a webinar series on the components of advocacy. These monthly webinars began in January

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ADVOCACY STRATEGY

- establish a legislative agenda
- develop and distribute relevant information
- conduct an annual public policy conference and/or workshops
- help educate and train at the state level
- promote and advocate for public policy issues
- give testimony



policy agenda and the legislative bills we are supporting, as well as prepare you for visits on Capitol Hill to discuss how these issues affect your legislator's constituency and why addiction treatment matters. This is your opportunity to be a part of the legislative process at the grass roots, the place where we all have a voice and where we can use that voice to share about the devastation of substance use disorders to individuals, families and communities.

Some of the bills that NAADAC is currently endorsing include:

- H.R. 5102 – Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act of 2018
- H.R. 4778/S. 2301 – Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act of 2018
- H.R. 3252 – Second Chance for Students Act
- H.R. 3545 – Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act
- H.R. 2938 – Road to Recovery Act
- H.R. 664 – STOP OD Act of 2017
- S. 778/H.R. 1854 – Prescription Drug Monitoring Act of 2017
- H.R. 3566 – Addiction Recovery for Rural Communities Act
- H.R. 3254 – Heroin and Opioid Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 2017

- H.R. 1354 – Stop Trafficking in Fentanyl Act of 2017
 - Related bill: H.R.1781 – Comprehensive Fentanyl Control Act
 - H.R. 2731 – Stop Taxpayer-Funded Alcohol Marketing Act
 - H.R. 774 – Medicaid Coverage of Tobacco Cessation Nonprescription Drugs Act
 - H.R. 3096 – Drug-Free Indian Health Service Act of 2017
 - S. 658 – Illegal Synthetic Drug Safety Act of 2017
 - S. 1453 – Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act
- Links to the text of all bills above can be found at www.naadac.org/take-action. Look for more information regarding our public policy initiatives on our website and register for the Advocacy webinars! See you in D.C. in November at the Advocacy in Action Conference! Together, we can and do make a difference!



Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, is the Executive Director of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, and has worked as an addiction professional for over 35 years. She has been a trainer in Domestic Violence/Anger Management and Conflict Resolution for over 25 years as well as an international, national and state trainer in a variety of topics. Moreno Tuohy is also a curriculum writer in addiction screening and evaluation, counseling methods, conflict resolution, co-occurring disorders, and medicated assisted treatment and recovery, and has written articles published in national and other trade magazines. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and is certified both nationally and in Washington State.

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and will culminate in the 2018 Advocacy in Action (AiA) Conference in Washington, DC, on November 11–13, 2018. This webinar series will help anyone engaged in advocacy work at the local, state, or national level, as well as heighten their awareness of the current issues, legislation, and roles in advocacy. The webinars, which are free to attend and available on NAADAC's website for viewing on demand, will cover:

- Medicaid
- 42 CFR Part 2 (Confidentiality)
- State Advocacy
- Budget/Appropriations
- Advocacy for Veterans/Military
- Workforce Advocacy
- Current Legislation and NAADAC Priorities
- Preparation for the AiA Conference

Another integral component of advocacy is being able to articulate those issues that are of national interest and importance to the profession. Each year, the PPC works to identify bills, agendas, and issues that are most likely to impact the addiction profession and the people who it serves and to provide relevant and useful information about these bills, agendas, and issues on NAADAC's website under the *Advocacy* section. Some of the legislative issues are ongoing and need to be in the forefront each year when meeting with our representatives and senators.

Current Legislative Priorities:

- Current Fiscal Year Block Grant Appropriations
- Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act
- Improving Access to Behavioral Health Information Technology Act
- Funding for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA)
- Medicaid Coverage for Addiction Recovery Expansion Act

While there is a cadre of other bills related to addiction treatment, these bills have the most impact in the day-to-day delivery of services. Without question, with Medicaid expansion and the graying-out effect of qualified treatment providers, it is imperative to increase the number of professionals coming into the profession. All of us need to encourage and mentor

young professionals and students alike about the benefits and rewards of working within this profession. Without our encouragement and active involvement, we will abdicate the quality delivery of addiction treatment services to less qualified providers.

Finally, each of us has a role at a variety of levels where we can and need to advocate for those we serve. As NAADAC members and addiction treatment professionals, we have an ethical responsibility to advocate where and when we can. I challenge and encourage each of you to:

- Stay informed – reading NAADAC's website is a great place to start.
- Become involved in NAADAC's Public Policy Committee or your NAADAC State Affiliate's.
- Attend state public policy conferences.
- Attend NAADAC's Advocacy in Action Conferences.
- Attend NAADAC's ongoing Advocacy Webinar Series.
- Follow NAADAC on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).
- Read the *eProfessional Update* for advocacy news.
- Take Action! Call, write and meet with your local, state, and national representatives.

Those who have come before us have paved the way for us to do the good work that we do. It is now our turn to enhance and light the way for those coming after us as we strive to provide the best quality treatment for those afflicted with this disease.



Gerard J. Schmidt, MA, LPC, MAC, is President of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals and the Chief Operations Officer at Valley HealthCare System in Morgantown, WV. He has served in the mental health and addictions treatment profession for the past 45 years. Publications to Schmidt's credit include several articles on the development of Employee Assistance Programs in rural areas and wellness in the workplace, addictions practice in the residential settings and an overview of addictions practice in the United States. He has edited Treatment Improvement Protocols for CSAT for several years and has been active with the Mid-Atlantic ATTC. Schmidt had served as Chair of the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCCAP) and NAADAC's Public Policy Committee, and as NAADAC's Clinical Affairs Consultant. Awards include the Distinguished Service Award in 2003 and the Senator Harold Hughes Advocate of the Year in 2010. In addition to his national and international work, Schmidt has been active within West Virginia in advocating for and supporting State legislative issues related to addictions and addiction treatment.