



Representing Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Meet Your 2017–2019 Mid-Central Regional Vice-President: Gisela Berger

By Jessica Gleason, JD, NAADAC Director of Communications



Gisela Berger, PhD, MAC, LPC, NCC, spent several years on the Board of Directors and then as President of Recovery & Addiction Professionals of Wisconsin (RAP-WI), NAADAC's Wisconsin affiliate. During her tenure as President, she facilitated a leadership retreat and contributed to the growth of the now vibrant and flourishing state affiliate organization. Under

Berger's leadership, the affiliate received over \$30,000 in donated funds, enabling state-wide trainings and low-cost, high-value conferences. As an educator, training the next generation of counselors and substance use disorder treatment specialists has allowed Berger to work with some exceptional young leaders. Her philosophy of inclusion has also been recognized at several levels of university leadership. When Berger first began her journey, she chose to specialize in substance use disorder treatment and has been grateful ever since.

Q: *What goals do you hope to accomplish during your time as Mid-Central RVP?*

A: I have a number of goals, listed in no particular order. I tend to favor one goal over another depending on the situation and the individual circumstances and priorities of each state in my region.

1. Enable each affiliate to function at its best. This might include helping each affiliate with board development, succession planning, and board education, encouragement, and selection, etc.
2. Work with each affiliate to ensure state licensure/certification boards are run by said affiliate rather than governor appointees or commissions.
3. Promote NAADAC/affiliate membership and all of its wonderful benefits with the hope of increasing membership.
4. Work on ensuring addiction workforce issues are appropriately handled by each affiliate, and not other entities hoping to gain by worker shortage, shortage of appropriate training/education, etc. This also includes making sure that other professions are appropriately trained in addiction treatment and vetted by the affiliate.
5. Work to make affiliates the go-to for all addiction professional issues in the state. This includes not only treatment but also prevention and peer recovery services.
6. Create a sense of cohesiveness and unity within the region.

Q: *What are the major issues or challenges happening in your region? How can NAADAC help overcome them?*

A: One major issue facing the Mid-Central Region is apathy. The new generation of individuals coming into the field are concerned not only with helping others but also with making a living wage. Often there is debt from educational endeavors as well as a family to support. We no longer have people in recovery working in this field as a second or third career, for example. We can't ask people to join an organization that isn't seen as relevant to earning a decent living. So, overcoming this stereotype is a huge project! But, I have every confidence in each state affiliate being up to the challenge. We are a vibrant, energetic organization working with entities on all levels to create something larger than each individual.

That is our strength!

Another issue facing our region is workforce development. There are few institutes of higher education offering Bachelor's degrees, much less Masters' degrees, in addiction studies. Yet, third party payers are requiring this level of education for reimbursement. Added to this is the problem of concentration: we have many professionals in most suburban areas. But, there are few to none in outlying areas and small, farming communities. Also, some urban areas are underserved but in dire need of services. It is a catch-22.

Finally, capacity building is challenging for different reasons within each affiliate. Working together, we can use each affiliate's unique strengths to assist with their unique concerns. Helping each affiliate find useful resources to meet this challenge will be a long process.

NAADAC can help by continuing to be a resource and keeping lines of communication open between affiliates, regions, institutes of higher education, third-party payers, and governmental entities at all levels. NAADAC's discussions with third-party payers as well as providing scholarships to attend institutes of higher education will help address concerns of apathy by showing our continued relevance. This is also helping address the many concerns around workforce development.

Q: *Why is NAADAC membership important for addiction professionals?*

A: Because what one person cannot do, we can all do together. Our strength is not only in our numbers but also in our willingness to give voice to those who cannot speak for themselves. People diagnosed with addiction disorders are often not heard and stigmatized. We can speak not only for ourselves but also for those we serve.

Q: *What are your hopes for the future of NAADAC?*

A: My hopes include making NAADAC the unifying voice for all addiction professionals, no matter what degree or license/certification they hold. This includes unification for education as well as portability of licenses/certifications. Portability is seen as key to having unified standards for each state to ensure optimal service to our clients.

Another hope I have is that NAADAC will urge appropriate reimbursement for services at all levels. Finally, I hope to see NAADAC as the powerful influence to end the stigmatization of all people with addiction disorders.

Realizing that my hopes are big dreams and won't happen soon, I will continue to serve to the best of my ability. Whatever I can do to help, I will.



Jessica Gleason, JD, is Director of Communications for NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. She manages all communications, marketing, public relations, and informational activities of the Association, the NAADAC website, and all digital media, marketing, and communications. Gleason is the Managing Editor for NAADAC's Advances in Addiction & Recovery magazine, and oversees the publication of NAADAC's two digital publications, the bi-weekly Addiction & Recovery eNews and weekly Professional eUpdate. Gleason holds a Juris Doctorate from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, MA and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in

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