

# Is Your Organization Ethically Oriented?

By Rose Maire, MAC, LCADC, CCS, NCSE, NAADAC Ethics Committee Co-Chair

Do organizations and agencies need organizational ethics? Does NAADAC's Code of Ethics apply to organizational members as well as individual members? Foundational to both questions is this question: what is an organization or agency? An organization or agency is an entity of like-minded individuals who share a common vision and purpose. Organizations and agencies can have one employee or thousands of employees. They can be privately or publicly funded, governmental or nongovernmental, and for profit or not-for-profit. Organizations providing addiction-related services have credentialed and noncredentialed professionals and service providers working for them. Most organizations are expected to operate within the scope of a professional Code of Ethics, like NAADAC's.

Most organizations have their own internal ethical philosophy or code of ethics in addition to a professional Code of Ethics such as that published by NAADAC. The organization's ethics are the values and standards of practice embedded within the framework and mission of their agency that are then carried out by the individuals and professionals employed there. Organizations need ethical principles to guide its operational decisions including its policies and procedures, financial management, marketing, and programming. An organization's ethical philosophy and adherence to external codes is communicated from the top down – from leadership to its managers, professionals, employees, and support staff. The leadership's ethical philosophy is communicated internally and externally and can influence the organization's productivity and reputation, and ultimately its viability. That ethical philosophy translates into an ethically oriented organization.

What are the attributes of an ethically oriented organization? At the top of the list is a desire to be an ethical organization that goes above and beyond legally and ethically to demonstrate its commitment to integrity, honesty, and responsibility. An ethically oriented organization has a mission and vision that drives its culture and values. Operational decision-making is based on ethical principles and values. All communication – internally and to the public – is ethical, honest, sensitive, professional. Communication including advertising and marketing materials, proposals and applications, and clinical documentation – online, in person, and in writing – is factual, person-sensitive, and client-focused. An investment is made by the agency to maintain an ethical workplace through training, socialization, and leadership engagement. The rights of individuals (employees and clients) are honored and respected. There is concern for one another, as individuals with value and worth. Morale amongst employees is monitored often; employee and client feedback about how the organization is doing is solicited regularly. Employees and others who express concerns to the agency's leadership about their ethics are not retaliated against. Destructive behaviors, including inappropriate use of power, is

prohibited. There is low tolerance for unethical, immoral and/or illegal behavior; procedures exist to address unethical and/or illegal behavior. The agency takes responsibility for what goes on in its organization and makes amends as needed.

Addiction professionals want to work in agencies that value their contribution to the agency, community, and profession. They want a safe workplace that is not driven by ego and power. The need to be respected and valued is understandable. At NAADAC, we value our organizational members for their commitment to our profession. Organizational members have been assaulted on so many fronts, including confusing legislation, billing and reimbursement nightmares, lack of parity, shortage of qualified workforce, credentialing and licensing concerns, scarcity of funding opportunities, employee retention concerns, expensive infrastructure needs, and COVID-19 setbacks. In the midst of all of these issues, it can be hard to monitor the organization's ethics and hold leadership and the organization accountable for any lack of ethics and professionalism. However, the times call for the organizational member to remain true to its ethical compass; this is not the time to become ethically disoriented.

NAADAC understands the struggles our agencies face, and NAADAC encourages its organizational members and its employees to adhere to the most current version of the NAADAC Code of Ethics. We want to stand with you as you strive to do the best you can with what you have. NAADAC's and NCC AP's Ethics Committee and your organizational professional liability insurance carrier will make themselves available to answer questions and provide guidance when organizational members are faced with an ethical dilemma. NAADAC is here to support its organizational members who are working to live up to their core values and highest ethical standards.



Rose Maire, MAC, LCADC, CCS, NCSE, has worked in the addiction treatment field for over 30 years and is currently the Clinical Director of COPE Center in Montclair, NJ. She holds a Master's degree in Counseling and is licensed in New Jersey as a Clinical Alcohol and Drug Counselor. She is also certified as a Master Addiction Counselor and a Certified Clinical Supervisor, and holds the National Clinical Supervision Endorsement. Maire has worked in outpatient, intensive outpatient, and short-term residential levels of care. She has also taught graduate level counseling courses and has worked as a Student Assistance Counselor. She is currently a member of the NJ Professional Advisory Committee. She also serves as Secretary to the newly formed New Jersey affiliate of NAADAC. Although she has held many different positions in the field, her first love remains working directly with clients. Maire was a commissioner on the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals (NCC AP) for 10 years. She found working with professionals dedicated to maintaining competency standards for addiction treatment professionals to be an honor and a highlight of her career. She currently serves as Co-Chair of the NAADAC Ethics committee.

Want to learn more about becoming a NAADAC organizational member? Visit [www.naadac.org/organizational-membership](http://www.naadac.org/organizational-membership).