

Calling All Students! Join the Effort to Grow the Addiction Profession Workforce

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

SAMSHA has tasked NAADAC with working to grow the addiction professional workforce. NAADAC and SAMSHA are calling on SAMSHA's Regional Administrators and Single State Authorities (SSAs), as well as NAADAC's 10,000+ members, 41,000+ constituents, and 47 State Affiliates, to join forces to reach out to freshman and sophomore college and university students across the country to build awareness of the the addiction workforce shortage, and the many benefits and opportunities available by joining the substance use and mental health disorder professions. This collaboration between SAMSHA, its SSAs, and NAADAC is a workforce recruitment and retention effort and will work to create a national picture of the addiction professional workforce, identify the gaps in the current workforce, and work to address the needs identified. The program includes identifying and qualifying state-specific needs, evaluating strategies currently in place and strategies being developed, identifying gaps in the current resources, and creating content and resources to address these needs.

This workforce program addresses two of SAMSHA's key strategic initiatives: Healthcare and Health Systems Integration, and Recovery Support. Due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), employment opportunities for new professionals to find and maintain employment in the substance use and mental health disciplines are on the rise and addiction professionals are gaining credibility in the overall health care world. This program will highlight the opportunities for advancement, creativity, professional development, and personal development in our rewarding profession with the goal to increase the number of college and university students that choose to join the substance use and mental health disorder professions.

A major focus of this program is the development of four onsite forums at college or university locations in Ohio, Louisiana, Colorado, and New England to reach out directly to freshman and sophomore students who are likely at the beginning stages of choosing a career or specialization in the behavioral health and mental health fields, and educate them on the benefits and opportunities involved in specializing in substance use disorders. The forums will be led by national trainers, persons in recovery who have joined the addiction profession, and/or addiction treatment providers that are making a difference in their communities. In addition, trainers will work with students to evaluate their potential career paths to take advantage of the 22% growth in employment opportunities for substance use and behavioral disorder counselors between 2014 and 2024 projected by the U.S. Department of Labor, and discuss funding alternatives including loans, grants, and work programs. Finally, treatment centers in the areas surrounding each forum will be invited to participate in a mini "job fair" to meet with students and discuss the potential for field placements and employment opportunities.

The four forums will take place in September 2016 as part of NAADAC and SAMSHA's National Recovery Month activities. NAADAC is working with a Workforce Planning Committee with members from the individual states or regions for help develop each of the forums. We are also working with each region's Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) as part of the well-rounded collaborative effort to reduce the workforce shortage crisis. In addition, each of the forums will expand its reach through satellite forums throughout their state and region, and, in some states, outreach to area high schools.

Finally, in coordination with the forums, NAADAC is developing two national online webinars that will address the availability of opportunities in the substance use and mental health disorder professions, the need behind the expansion of opportunities in these professions, the requirements necessary to join the workforce within each of the major discipline categories, and ideas for current workforce retention.

The whole nation is invited to participate in the National Workforce webinars and for those who are close to a forum, to come and join in-person. For those not close to a forum, each forum will be live-streamed by its college or university and recorded for posting on NAADAC's YouTube channel for on-demand watching. NAADAC will be announcing the dates and times of the live-streams and notify the public of the availability of the on-demand recordings through its communication channels.

Here's where you come in! We need ideas regarding both workforce recruitment and workforce retention. How do you currently recruit people? How would you have liked to have been recruited? What incentives would you have liked to have been offered? What do you believe to be the most effective ways to retain a workforce in the addictions and mental health fields? If you have read research, papers, conducted your own agency survey, or want to share your own experiences, opinions, ideas or thoughts, please send those as well! Please send your thoughts, ideas, and opinions to jgleason@naadac.org.

NAADAC, SAMSHA and the SSAs are working to raise the workforce of tomorrow! Together, we can all play a part in that effort!

Blessings,
Cynthia



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

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