

Advocating for the Addiction Profession

By Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, BSW, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP, NAADAC Executive Director, Julie Shroyer, MSW, Senior Policy Advisor, Polsinelli and Robert Daley, Legislative Director, Polsinelli

Addiction is the number one public health issue in the United States today. The COVID-19 pandemic is only expanding the treatment gap currently facing millions of Americans with addiction issues. Throughout the pandemic, reports have shown increases in both substance use and overdose related deaths. Last year, NAADAC’s members actively engaged with Congress and the administration advocating for increased funding for addiction and mental health treatment and recovery programs. In December, after months of stalled negotiations, Congress passed a comprehensive fiscal 2021 spending and COVID-19 relief package.

Although more resources will be needed to address the impacts of COVID-19 and the addiction pandemic, NAADAC was pleased that the end-of-the year package included fiscal 2021 funding increases for a number of addiction infrastructure and workforce programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The package also included **\$4.25 billion** in emergency funding for substance use and mental health disorder programs, along with provisions to strengthen parity in substance use and mental health disorder benefits. Strengthening parity oversight was a top legislative priority for NAADAC during last year’s Virtual Hill Day. **There is no question that the advocacy of NAADAC’s dedicated members helped shape these policies! Thank you for your support and adding your voice to support this vital legislation!**

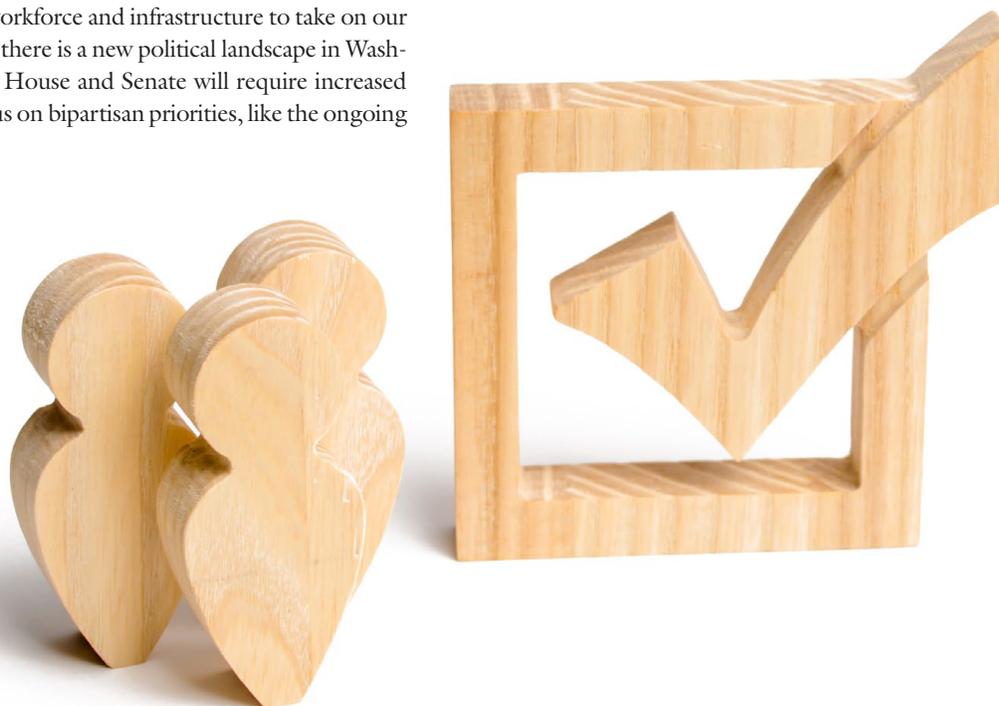
What’s on the Federal Agenda in 2021?

NAADAC is actively working with the new Congress and administration to build on last year’s accomplishments. We have seen that our collective voices can make a difference, and we will continue to advocate for expanding the addiction workforce and infrastructure to take on our nation’s growing crisis. While there is a new political landscape in Washington, slim majorities in the House and Senate will require increased cooperation as lawmakers focus on bipartisan priorities, like the ongoing addiction pandemic.

Following the November election, we engaged immediately with the Biden transition team to advocate for additional funding and resources to address COVID-19’s growing impact on addiction and to ensure that addiction professionals are in the forefront of future policy efforts, including workforce and infrastructure supports. Responding to the ongoing pandemic is a top-priority for Washington’s policymakers. We were pleased to see that President Biden unveiled his COVID-19 relief proposal last month—prior to his inauguration—that includes a request for **\$4 billion** in emergency funding for SAMHSA and HRSA programs. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has said the President’s COVID package will be one of the first issues the chamber will consider this year. The Biden Administration has also been pushing for Congress to work on reforming and strengthening the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

NAADAC has also been engaging with Congress and sent a welcome letter to House and Senate members outlining COVID-19’s impact on addiction. We also asked members of the House to join the Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, and Bipartisan Heroin and Opioids Task Force. These bipartisan caucuses will play a central role in the Congressional response to the addiction pandemic by helping with policy development and stakeholder engagement. We encourage you to contact your representatives and ask them to join these important caucuses so they can stay engaged.

In the coming weeks, President Biden will send his first budget request to Congress. The budget will outline the administration’s top spending and legislative priorities for the coming year. During the 2020 campaign, President Biden released a detailed plan to end the opioid crisis and ensure access to effective treatment and recovery services for substance use



disorders. We expect the President's plan to focus on strengthening and expanding the ACA, directing senior health officials to enforce substance use and mental health parity laws, and proposing a significant investment to expand prevention, treatment, and recovery services for those impacted by addiction.

How Can You Help?

It's important for Congress to hear directly from their constituents! We encourage you to follow NAADAC's online advocacy blog for policy updates and grassroots action alerts. You can also participate in NAADAC's 2021 Advocacy in Action Conference & Virtual Hill Day, which will take place on April 13-15, 2021! Our virtual Advocacy in Action Conference will provide the opportunity to attend briefings on current legislation and learn about important advocacy issues. The Virtual Hill Day also allows attendees to speak directly with lawmakers on Capitol Hill about the issues that affect the addiction profession and those it serves - all from your home or office!

As a country we must commit to building and maintaining a strong addiction workforce and infrastructure that can take on our nation's growing crisis in a way that helps individuals with substance use disorders and their families find the treatment and recovery services they need. NAADAC thanks you for your dedication to support those in need of addiction and mental health prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support! We look forward to working with you to continue building on these accomplishments.



Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, BSW, 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 the State of Washington.



Julie Shroyer, MSW, is Senior Policy Advisor in the Washington, DC, office of Polsinelli, a national law and public policy firm. She has more than 30 years of federal health policy experience, including service on Capitol Hill as committee staff and in senior positions in both the non-profit and private sector. A respected advisor to congressional and presidential campaigns, she is sought after for her recognized expertise in health care and public policy. Shroyer serves on the Board of Directors of House of Ruth, a DC-based non-profit organization that empowers women, children, and families to rebuild their lives and heal from trauma, abuse, and homelessness. She graduated from Western Michigan University with a Bachelor's degree in social work and earned a Master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan.



Robert Daley is a Legislative Director in the Washington, DC, office of Polsinelli, a national law and public policy firm. He has over a decade of public policy experience, including serving as an aide to Members of Congress. Daley works with a wide range of health care clients to develop legislative strategies, craft policy solutions and represent their interests before policymakers in Washington. He helps clients navigate and understand changing political and legislative dynamics to appropriately adjust their advocacy efforts to meet their goals. He has worked to secure favorable client outcomes on federal appropriations, as well as legislation to modernize Medicare reimbursements, and reduce opioid prescribing. He is a graduate of American University in Washington, DC.

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