

## NAADAC's Position on Effectively Treating the Opioid Epidemic

NAADAC will continue to champion treatment and recovery services that are inclusive, holistic and unique to the individual needs of each affected person. In recognizing that treatment is not one dimensional, nor is there a "one size fits all" method, NAADAC encourages the use of comprehensive treatment plans that encompass bio-psycho-social-spiritual needs as one begins his or her road to sustained recovery.

### The Enormity of the Problem

In 2015, an estimated 2 million people in the United States met diagnostic criteria for substance use disorder related to prescription opioid pain medications, and another estimated 600,000 met diagnostic criteria for opioid use disorder, specifically heroin. (HHS, 2016)

### The Importance of Treating the Whole Person

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT), such use of as opioid agonist medications, is evidence-base and a best practice for treatment of opioid addiction, but opioid agonist medications, like buprenorphine and methadone, are not meant to act as stand-alone treatment.

NAADAC, along with the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and countless other authorities, recognizes the need for treatment approaches that address the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual needs of the individual.

Despite these recommendations, many patients report they receive only minimal services, if any at all, which may offer some explanation for the reasons given for discontinuing treatment, even though treatment of physical withdrawal and the associated craving are the target of MAT. NAADAC believes that it is a better practice to speak of MAT as "Medication Treatment and Recovery – MATR" to emphasize that recovery and the treatment of socialization, relationship repair and health, and other recovery skills for patients and family members is essential to the efficacy of the patient and conducive to long-term recovery from this chronic disease.

### Important Role of Addiction Counselors and Aspects of Care

NAADAC believes counselors specifically trained and experienced in treating addiction play a key role in the overall treatment of opioid dependent individuals, as well as those suffering from other types of substance use disorders. Licensed and/or certified addiction counselors are uniquely qualified to assist individuals to develop these skills and resources, and should be part of a multi-dimensional treatment approach for those receiving MATR.

### Call for Public Policy to Address Opioid Epidemic

As addiction professionals, we bring firsthand knowledge of the nature of addiction and the devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities. We also know the possibilities of recovery and the hope and healing that occurs. As the opioid epidemic continues, we call for:

- Expanded funding for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), as well as the recently passed SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act;
- Maintaining the increased access to quality care the Affordable Care Act, along with the Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Equity Act, have brought to those struggling with substance use disorders;
- Strong requirements for, and expanded funding of, comprehensive treatment planning and counseling services by competent licensed/certified addiction professionals, along with monitoring through urine drug screens, to accompany medication assisted treatment and recovery;
- Expansion of MATR to reduce waiting lists and provide access, especially in rural areas;
- Funding to educate addiction counselors in MATR and other evidenced based counseling methods and its integration into psychosocial treatment approaches;
- Funding to educate addiction counselors in degree programs to grow the addiction workforce that will treat the expanding needs for of the patients coming into care;
- Funding to have naloxone in the hands of all first responders;
- Inclusion of naloxone, naltrexone and Suboxone in the formularies of approved medications for insurance coverage; and
- Good Samaritan legislation that provides a defense to prosecution for an individual who calls for help for him/herself and/or someone else at risk of overdose.
- Infrastructure support for treatment agencies and recovery support centers that receive federal funding (SAPT grants, ROSC funding, etc.) to ensure their stability and breath of services including parity of salary and benefits with private industry.