

## **Working Paper on Improving Access to Addiction Prevention and Treatment Services for Veterans and their Families**

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
Public Policy Subcommittee on Veterans Health Care

*No discussion of veterans' health care—including mental health care—is complete without addressing drug and alcohol addiction.*

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, believes that all veterans—including full-time servicemen and women, the National Guard, Reservists and their families – deserve the highest quality of health care possible.

NAADAC commends the attention that veterans' general and mental health issues have received in recent years, yet NAADAC is concerned that substance use disorders have not yet been adequately addressed. Policymakers must expand addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services in order to truly meet the health care needs of veterans and their families.

Specifically, NAADAC recommends:

- I. Making the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense health care systems more inclusive, and reach out to civilian resources when it will improve addiction recovery service delivery.
  - Avoid redundant systems whenever possible and leverage existing certified addiction professionals and treatment centers to meet the increased need.
  - Improve the relationship between Tricare—the military's health plan—and treatment providers through fairer and faster reimbursement schemes, expanding the number of treatment centers that serve Tricare beneficiaries and ending the practice of classifying combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a “pre-existing condition” ineligible for benefits.
- II. Creating new, gender-sensitive prevention and treatment strategies to address the unprecedented role women have played in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- III. Improving access to addiction services to family members of servicemen and women and veterans.
  - Particularly because the National Guard and Reserves have served so extensively in the current conflict, families are under increased duress and threat of addiction.
- IV. Increasing PTSD training for addiction professionals and educating other mental health workers to identify substance use disorders when co-occurring with PTSD.
  - Mental health care providers must be trained to identify drug and alcohol-using PTSD clients. Addiction professionals must be trained to identify and treat patients with co-occurring PTSD and substance use disorders.
- V. Engaging with policymakers, stakeholders, the media and the general public on behalf of NAADAC's membership to promote improved addiction prevention, intervention and treatment for active duty servicemen and women, veterans and military families.