

# Leadership: Transformational at Our Core

By Mita Johnson, EdD, LPC, LMFT, LAC, MAC, SAP, CTHP-II, NAADAC President

Being part of NAADAC's mission and vision and being part of NAADAC's first fifty years in various positions of leadership has allowed me to see the heart and backbone of NAADAC, NCC AP, and NASAC. While the science of addiction has elevated NAADAC's understanding about how to prevent, treat, and recover from substance use and addictive behavior disorders, strategic leadership decisions executed by executive staff and directors at the direction of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee have allowed us to be a transformational organization with a national and global impact. NAADAC, with phenomenal leadership by the Executive Director Cynthia Moreno Tuohy and NAADAC's Executive Committee, is an organization well positioned to make a meaningful difference within the broader profession regarding workforce development, support, and retention; the development of multiple career entry points and pathways; parity and insurance reimbursement; expanded professional development opportunities; national credentialing; accepted, ethical practice standards; accreditation expectations; and business development. As an organization, NAADAC and its affiliates are proud to be at the table with important allied professional associations, accrediting bodies, educational institutions, scientific communities, governmental entities, legislative trailblazers, healthcare organizations, and community stakeholders. We all have one overarching vision and mission: to provide the best prevention, clinical, and recovery services to each and every client struggling with an addictive disorder.

NAADAC has been intentional in its focus over the past fifty years. NAADAC has led the charge in changing communities, organizations, agencies, and larger stakeholders one person at a time. The work we do is truly transformational, human at its core, with a goal of initiating and supporting transformational change within our industry. We have had to get creative at times to find solutions that fit the need at the time – that is the beauty of bringing together complementary and diverse perspectives. We have welcomed challenges and change – that is what has grown and strengthened NAADAC at its core. In addition to incorporating scientific research and evidence-based outcome data into our strategic focus, we have also sought out and listened to

industry and organizational leaders about who we are and what we can be doing to support the profession along the entire continuum of care from preventionists to clinicians to peer mentors. Leadership is something we take very seriously at NAADAC; every person in a position of leadership at NAADAC understands and accepts that they have an ethical, professional, and fiduciary obligation to protect the organization and the profession. These are valid expectations of the leaders within our organization.

As the current President of NAADAC, I have seen first-hand how NAADAC operates on a day-to-day basis, as well as how NAADAC lives up to the expectations put on us by our industry. What I have seen is an organization that remains flexible to change, accepting the fact that nothing remains the same for very long. We keep a laser focus on the needs of our members, continually looking for innovations that help our members connect with NAADAC, network with one another, improve their professional practice, and uplift workplace standards. We apply the latest in behavioral science to support workplace initiatives; NAADAC recognizes internally and externally that we need a qualified, agile, and resilient workforce to get the work done.

Our profession would not exist without human, financial, and community capital; leadership within NAADAC are continually looking for and leveraging resources and technology that help us meet our strategic goals and objectives. We continually converge on the human element of the work we do; NAADAC recognizes that our success and the success of our members and professional allies depends on having a visionary perspective that support the people who are out there on the front lines helping people. Our leaders advocate for parity – we have a voice at the table and our members deserve to be recognized as the specialists they are. Beyond having a credible vision, we have and need leaders who can make change happen that is transformational while also meaningful and relevant.

NAADAC has had the privilege of welcoming and trusting outstanding people in positions of leadership as both employees and volunteers. Leadership is never an easy task and yet the influence that a leader can have on an organization cannot be underestimated. Leaders act as guides,





advocates, and protectors. Leaders have the opportunity to influence the direction of NAADAC today, tomorrow, and over the next fifty years. To know as a leader that you are part of a group of people who care about the members of our communities who are in need of quality services and care and that you can help set the course and direction of NAADAC as we find ourselves influencing more and more national and global entities affiliated with our industry is rewarding and life changing. Leaders bring their expertise, knowledge, and community concerns to the table; we know that issues happening in one state are happening in many states. At NAADAC, leaders support one another as they guide NAADAC. I am grateful for my leadership experiences at NAADAC on the Executive Committee, and for the opportunity to work with the Executive Director and the amazing Deputy and Departmental Directors who help steer the ship. If you have ever thought about wanting to give back to the profession, if you have ever thought about wanting to influence change, or if you have ever thought about wanting to guide where we are going as an organization in the next five

decades, please consider joining me and other NAADAC leaders as we roll up our sleeves and plot our next strategic goals and objectives. You will make a difference and your voice will be heard.



*Mita M. Johnson, EdD, LPC, LMFT, LAC, MAC, SAP, CTHP-II, has been practicing in the world of mental health, marriage and family, and addictions counseling for the past 30 years. She earned her Doctorate degree in Counselor Education and Supervision and is a core faculty member in the School of Counseling program at Walden University. In addition, she has a thriving private practice where she provides telebehavioral health services, clinical supervision, counseling to our military, and addiction-specific training and education. She has been providing telebehavioral health services to individuals and groups for several years and is a board-certified telehealth practitioner. She is involved in regulatory and credentialing activities in Colorado and regional workforce recruitment and retention initiatives. Her areas of specialization include pharmacology, co-occurring disorders, ethics, culturally-responsive care, and clinical supervision. She has been an active member of NAADAC for the last 15 years, has served as the Chair of the NAADAC Ethics Committee, and began her term as the NAADAC President in October 2020.*



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Lisa Kaplan, LMSW, CAADC, ACSW  
Program Coordinator  
Maple Grove Addiction Treatment Center  
Henry Ford Health Systems

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