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Public advocacy campaign moves forward with initial funding

In what field leaders hope will be a turning point in fighting public perceptions about treatment and addiction, a planned advocacy campaign designed to educate the public about what addiction is and how people recover and move forward from it has received its first wave of funding.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Inc. (NCADD), which has taken the lead on moving the campaign forward, has secured \$325,000 in public and private support. Among the financial pledges are \$100,000 from the Hanley Family Foundation and \$25,000 from Roger Bensinger, president of Bencorp and a member of NCADD's board of directors.

The campaign emanates from an agreement reached by 58 national groups and associations at last May's second Providence Summit on Addiction that a public advocacy campaign must move forward (see *ADAW*, June 7). The agreement represented an unprecedented consensus among the leading organizations and individuals in the addiction treatment and prevention fields.

At that time, NCADD pledged to raise \$250,000 toward the joint effort and donate a portion of their Washington lobbyist's time. The raising of \$325,000 represents a critical first step in establishing the campaign.

"I am pleased that we have raised adequate funds to do the first stage of this new approach addressing the number one health problem in the United States and I am encouraged with the response we have been getting from individuals and institu-

tions regarding additional support," Bensinger told *ADAW*.

Bensinger said that efforts are underway in key cities across the United States to garner additional support for the campaign.

NCADD President Stacia Murphy added that "it's a very exciting moment and an appropriate follow-up to the summit held in May. We're excited about putting together a campaign that includes the entire field."

NCADD has signed an agreement with the public relations firm Burson-Marsteller to implement the advocacy campaign. The firm will spend the next six months developing a business plan for the campaign.

"What the agency will begin to do is test messages and themes through the use of focus groups, individual interviews and a full review of previous campaign efforts in order to come up with a recommended variety of themes for the national campaign," said Bensinger. As part of the business plan, the agency will set forth practical, strategic steps necessary to implement a multi-year, multi-media communication action campaign, said Bensinger.

Field leaders are clearly energized by the involvement and support of many leaders and organizations across the addiction field.

"I've been active in the addiction field for forty years and this could be the most significant development I have seen," David C. Lewis, M.D., project director of Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy, founder of the Brown University Center for Alcohol and Addiction

Studies and NCADD board chairman, told *ADAW*. "It could truly transform the way the public views our efforts to provide treatment to those who need it."

Added Faces and Voices of Recovery Campaign Coordinator Pat Taylor: "We're really excited about opportunities to educate the public about fighting stigma to end discrimination - we embrace all efforts to move forward."

The idea of the campaign is to increase the public's understanding of addiction treatment and bring about a change in attitudes, laws and policies. The campaign will seek to educate and motivate the public to urge those with alcohol and other drug problems to seek help; to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with alcohol and drug dependence; and to measurably reduce societal costs associated with alcohol and drug dependence.

A recent survey from Peter D. Hart Research Associates found strong public support for treatment, but also found a lack of understanding of some treatment concepts. Less than a majority of American adults supported the notion of a disease model and many said that addiction is at least, in part, a moral weakness.

Collaborative approach

While NCADD has taken the lead in moving the campaign forward, the effort will comprise contributions from a diverse group of field leaders. The campaign's steering committee includes leaders of several major organizations, including Ronald J. Hunsicker, president and

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 chief executive of the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (NAATP); Lewis E. Gallant, Ph.D., executive director of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD); Pat Taylor, campaign coordinator of Faces and Voices of Recovery; Linda Hay Crawford, executive director of Therapeutic Communities of America; Carol McDaid, principal of Capitol Decisions; and Ivette Torres, associate director of consumer affairs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

NCADD has also established a three-person oversight committee consisting of Bensinger, John Hanley (of the Hanley Family Foundation), and NCADD board member Rudy Ruggles. The oversight committee will keep Murphy and the NCADD board apprised of the campaign, said Bensinger.

NCADD has also established a campaign working group consisting of Bensinger, Murphy, NCADD board members Peter Rhulen, Ileana van der Linde and Fraser Lang (president of Manisses Communications Group, publisher of *ADAW*) and NCADD Communications Director Ames Sweet. This group will interact with Burson-Marsteller.

Bensinger and McDaid will be responsible for seeking reactions and recommendations from the steering committee that will be incorporated into the campaign, said Bensinger.

"The steering committee will be crucial in giving us feedback," Murphy told *ADAW*.

The collaborative nature of this campaign will extend to the past and present work done by other campaigns. The campaign plans to work closely with and exchange information with organizations such as Faces and Voices of Recovery and the Partnership for a Drug-Free

America, said Bensinger. "Both of these organizations have done excellent work," said Bensinger.

NCADD officials are also excited about their working arrangement with Burson-Marsteller. "I believe that we now have access to some of the very best talent and experience through Burson-Marsteller, which is an organization with tremendous experience addressing stigma-sensitive issues," said Bensinger.

Added Murphy: "We have one of the best public relations firms in the country working with us."

"We are moving to change the enormous stigma that results in discrimination toward people with alcohol and other drug problems," said Murphy. "Many years ago, [NCADD founder] Marty Mann said that we must take this problem to the heart of America — she did that back in the 50s and 60s and we're doing it again in the twenty-first century."

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