I-STARR
ANNUAL REPORT:
YEAR ONE PROGRESS

SEPTEMBER 30, 2022 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

I-STARR stands for Infrastructure for Treatment and Addiction Recovery Residences. On behalf of the I-STARR team, we are delighted to share accomplishments made during of the first year of this highly significant and innovative project.

Safe and stable housing, such as that provided within the context of recovery housing, is widely recognized as critical to recovery from alcohol and drug use disorders generally, but it may be even more critical to recovery from opioid use disorders (OUD). Unfortunately, research on the outcomes of recovery housing residents in recovery from OUD, particularly those being treated with medications is limited. Further, there is literature that suggests that individuals being treated with medications for OUD (MOUD) may experience barriers to recovery housing due to negative attitudes towards MOUD and lack of recovery housing that is equipped to support persons on medication.

The I-STARR project seeks to enhance infrastructure to conduct effectiveness research on recovery housing for persons treated with medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). Specifically, it aims to: (1) Develop a network of diverse stakeholders dedicated to expanding access to recovery housing for persons prescribed MOUD and conducting research on it; (2) Increase capacity of recovery housing that is equipped to support residents who are prescribed MOUD and to participate in effectiveness research as well as researchers who are trained to conduct it; (3) Provide resources and opportunities to junior investigators and those who may be new to recovery housing research to collaborate with recovery housing researchers to expand the evidence base on recovery housing for persons treated with MOUD. The report that follows highlights progress in each of these areas.

This progress could not have been accomplished without the support of our team members: Co-Investigators Leonard Jason and Sarah Zemore; Biostatisticians Meenakshi Subbaraman and Libo Li; Communications Specialists Diane Schmidt and Dustin Khebzou; and Project Coordinators Adrienne Faxio and Kwinoja Kapiteni. All I-STARR efforts are also guided by a 17-member Advisory Board. Although most of our Advisory Board members wear multiple hats and have diverse expertise, collectively they represent:

RECOVERY & RECOVERY HOUSING LEADERS
- Kathleen Gibson, Oxford House, Inc
- Darrel Mitchell, Progress House
- Dave Sheridan, National Alliance for Recovery Residences
- Ronald (RT) Tannebaum, InTheRooms

TREATMENT PROVIDERS AND PAYORS
- Hillary Kunins, San Francisco Department of Public Health
- Roland Lamb, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health
- Quyen Ngo, Hazelden Betty Ford Butler Center for Research
- D. Andrew Tompkins, San Francisco General Hospital

NATIONAL POLICY ADVOCATES
- Patricia Clay, Treatment Communities of America
- Anna Pagano, American Society of Addiction Medicine
- Mark Parrino, AATOD
- Aaron Williams, National Council for Mental Wellbeing

RESEARCHERS & EDUCATORS
- Steven Belenko, Temple University
- Kathy Burlew, University of Cincinnati
- H. Westley Clark, Santa Clara University
- John Majer, Truman College
- Sharon Reif, Brandeis University

We hope that the coming years of the project continue to be as successful as our first and we look forward to sharing updates of subsequent years.

Amy & Carmen

Amy Mericle, PhD
I-STARR MPI

Carmen Masson, PhD
I-STARR MPI

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AIM 1:
NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

In the first year of this award, we made significant progress on each aim of the project. For the first aim, we assembled and met with our 17-member Advisory Board in January 2023 and March 2023.

Our Advisory Board is comprised of recovery and recovery housing experts, treatment providers and payors, national leaders and advocates, as well as researchers and educators, all of whom have expertise in recovery housing and/or treatment of persons with opioid use disorders. In addition to orienting Advisory Members to the project and their role on it, we also used these meetings to help shape research and training priorities for the I-STARR project.

Our Advisory Board members have also served as a resource when we have needed reviewers for our pilot study program, been presenters for training webinars, and assisted in disseminating information about the project's activities to help grow the project's reach, and participated in I-STARR activities.

The I-STARR network currently consists of 793 subscribers*, representing a mix of professionals as diverse in expertise and background as our Advisory Board. The I-STARR website serves as repository of information about the study and is a key resource for network members.

*as of 02/02/24

SUBSCRIBERS BY THE NUMBERS*

462
PROVIDERS

285
RESEARCHERS

112
COARS NETWORK

*some subscribers belong to more than one category

AIM 1:
COLLABORATIONS

As the I-STARR project is funded by the NIH HEAL Initiative and is a member of the Consortium on Addiction Recovery Science (CoARS) network, the team also supports the aims of these projects as well.

The study is registered on the HEAL Data Platform and MPI Mericle (contact MPI) attended the HEAL investigator meeting. Both MPIs Mericle and Masson regularly attend CoARS Steering Committee meetings.

MPI Mericle sits on the Webpage and Conference workgroup and MPI Masson sits on the Mentoring and Training workgroup.

In August 2023, the entire I-STARR team presented on the aims and progress of the I-STARR project at a CoARS showcase.

The MPIs also participated in networking and training opportunities offered by the CoARS network.

NIH
HEAL
INITIATIVE

AIM 2:
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

8
WEBINARS

944
REGISTRANTS*

431
ATTENDEES*

324
YOUTUBE VIEWS*

*Totals are cumulative

We launched the I-STARR webinar series in April 2023 with an introduction to the project followed by the first training session in June 2023. The webinars have two tracks: one for providers and operators, and one for researchers. Each series consists of 12 webinars.

Led by experts affiliated with the National Alliance for Recovery Residences, the operator/provider series has, so far, focused on the recovery environment and recovery support, recovery residence management and operations, as well as resident policies.

Webinars in the researcher series are methods-based and are presented by persons with specific expertise on a particular topic as well as persons who have experience implementing particular methods in recovery housing research. Thus far, these webinars have covered experimental and quasi-experimental recovery housing research designs, sampling and collaborating with recovery residences providers and operators, as well as principles of community-based participatory research.

Interest in these webinars has been generally high, ranging from 80 to 260 webinar registrants depending on topic and target audience. However, in-person attendance has ranged from 30-120 live webinar attendees.

To ensure all interested persons can benefit from these webinars, even if they are unable to attend live, we post webinars on the I-STARR website and have built a learning management system that provides a more interactive method to engage with the content.

Individuals can register and attend any and all webinars, but we are hoping that individuals participate in all 12 webinars in a particular track. To incentivize this, we will provide a certificate to those who attend all 12 webinars and, in the interest of connecting capable recovery housing operators and providers with trained researchers, we will also offer to list their names on the I-STARR website. We also applied for and became a NAADAC-approved education provider so that those who attend all 12 of the operator/provider webinars can earn CEUs.

AIM 3:
SUPPORTING NEW AND EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS

In the grant development process, we reached out to **Rachel Winograd**, PhD, assistant professor at the University of Missouri, St Louis to submit an application for pilot study funding. Rachel's idea, to develop a measure of MOUD barriers assessing both stigma and capabilities with versions for residence managers and residents, was refined with feedback from team members, and her project was approved for funding in the summer 2023.

RACHEL WINOGRAD   JODIE DEWEY

In the spring, we also issued a request for applications to support another pilot study. Four individuals responded with a Letter of Intent. Key personnel on the I-STARR project reviewed these letters and two were invited to submit a full application. The Pilot Study Review Committee, consisting of key personnel and a subset of the Advisory Board who have led NIH-funded research, selected an application put forth by **Jodie Dewey**, PhD, research scientist at Chestnut Health Systems.

Jodie's pilot study seeks to identify effective recovery housing policies and practices for working with criminal legal system-involved (CLS) residents who are receiving medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD). She will use a qualitative comparative case approach that involves collecting information on policies and procedures as well as focus group and qualitative interview data from staff and residents in four recovery homes serving the target population.
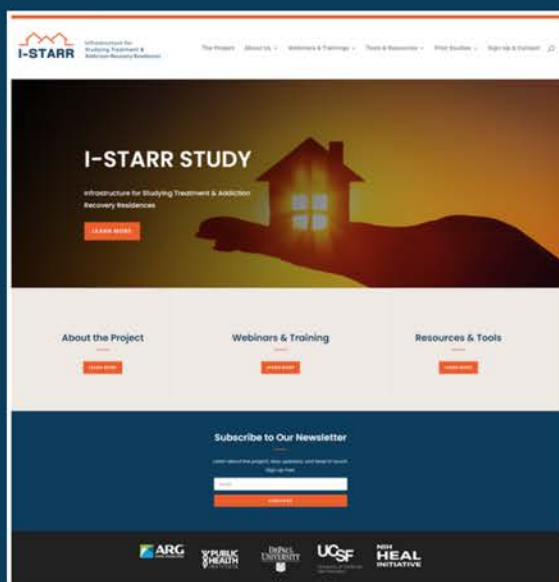
DISSEMINATION

We do not have results, per se, from the project or the pilot studies at this point. However, we have been actively engaged with a range of stakeholders, including researchers, providers, and policymakers and have been keeping them informed on the goals of each project and our progress.

MPI Mericle presented on gaps in evidence base for recovery housing and how the I-STARR project addresses these gaps at a pre-conference workshop on recovery housing at NatCon 2023. MPIs Mericle and Masson presented on MOUD and recovery housing at a MAT ECHO clinic, and Co-I Leonard Jason presented on recovery housing in Indigenous communities at a Tribal ECHO clinic.

MPI Mericle also shared information on the I-STARR project when presenting on What's New and What's Newsworthy at the Oxford House World Convention. I-STARR project activities are also disseminated to stakeholders and wider audiences through our newsletters and project website: istarr.arg.org.

The website provides information and relevant resources for recovery housing operators, researchers, trainees, policy makers, and other stakeholders on the topic of research on recovery housing for persons treated with MOUD.

This website also serves as a repository for videos of our webinars. Those who are registered for the Operator/Provider or the Researcher Training series can access a learning management system on this website to take part in these courses interactively if live webinars were missed.

It also allows the I-STARR team to interact with participants and provide people who complete the entire 12-session series a certificate of completion (researchers) or CEUs (operators and providers).

WHAT'S COMING UP IN **YEAR TWO**

WEBINARS AND TRAINING

In the next year, we will continue to address the aims of the project. As the year-long operator/provider and researcher trainings will be completed in May 2024, we will use our Advisory Board to help generate ideas for additional webinars for the remainder of year two of the project.

At the end of the series, those who have completed all 12 trainings in a series will receive recognition for their participation in the series, but because the courses will be housed on our learning management system, we anticipate this activity will be ongoing, as individuals who may have missed certain live webinars or learned about the trainings series only after the live webinars were completed.

SUPPORTING NEW AND EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS

In addition to supporting and mentoring the two researchers currently funded under our pilot study program, we also anticipate supporting two additional pilot studies.

We released another request for applications in October 2023 and will make decisions about funding of pilot studies in March 2024. We will continue to participate in HEAL and CoARS network activities and promote the I-STARR project and activities in our newsletter, project website, and at stakeholder conferences (e.g., the National Alliance for Recovery Housing Best Practices Summit, CPDD, AHSR, etc.). We are also working on a manuscript that highlights priorities for research on recovery housing and MOUD established by our Advisory Board and a curated bibliography of the recovery housing literature for researchers, trainees, providers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to post on our website.

NETWORK BUILDING

We continue to find ways to engage in community-building practices through our dissemination platforms such as the website, social media, a quarterly newsletter, and our training series which brings together a diverse group of individuals focused on learning more about how best to support people in recovery.

To facilitate knowledge exchange, we are developing an intranet focused on bringing together Advisory Board members, Pilot Study Directors, webinar presenters, and our internal I-STARR team. With forums, resource-sharing, and the opportunity to engage, the intranet provides a mechanism to build lasting connections.

Safe and stable housing is critical to recovery from alcohol and drug use disorders generally, and may be even more critical to recovery from opioid use disorders (OUD).

Recovery housing may address a resident's need for a safe and healthy living environment while supplying the requisite recovery and peer supports. Unfortunately, research is limited on how recovery housing may help residents in recovery from OUD, particularly those being treated with medications for opioid use disorders (MOUD).

The I-STARR project seeks to foster and support research on recovery housing for persons treated with MOUD.

istarr.arg.org