



# I-STARR ANNUAL REPORT: YEAR TWO PROGRESS

SEPTEMBER 30, 2023 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

# FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

**I-STARR stands for Infrastructure for Treatment and Addiction Recovery Residences.** On behalf of the entire I-STARR team, we are pleased to share progress on activities completed during the second year of the project. At this time, we are delighted to report that the I-STARR project is achieving all of its stated aims.

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 early-career 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 annual report highlights progress in each of the project areas.

In the second year of the project, we specifically set out to further develop our networking capabilities by expanding the capacity and functionality of the I-STARR website. We also wrapped up the I-STARR training series, provided recognition to all researchers and operators/providers who participated in it, and launched the new monthly webinar series. While continuing to support those selected for the first round of pilot study funding, we also funded another round of pilot studies.

Progress in each of these areas was made possible by the support of our team members: Co-Investigators Leonard Jason and Sarah Zembre; Biostatisticians Meenakshi Subbaraman and Libo Li; Communications Specialists Diane Schmidt and Dustin Khebzou; and Project Coordinator 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:

cont'd

## **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

In sum, the project has continued to meet its aims by successfully building capacity for conducting recovery housing research, with a particular emphasis on supporting individuals receiving MOUD in recovery housing. Additionally, the project has effectively built a network of diverse stakeholders dedicated to expanding access to recovery housing for individuals prescribed MOUD, disseminated the latest research in recovery science to a diverse audience, including recovery housing providers, researchers, trainees, and other key stakeholders (e.g., residents, payers, and recovery housing advocates), and supported emerging scientists in the field.

We look forward to continued success in the coming years of the project and are eager to share updates on its progress along the way.

*Amy & Carmen*



**Amy Mericle, PhD  
I-STARR MPI**



**Carmen Masson, PhD  
I-STARR MPI**

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## AIM 1: NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

In the second year of the project, we held two meetings with our 17-member Advisory Board twice, in February 2024 and June 2024. Our Advisory Board comprises 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 keeping our the Advisory Board updated on study progress, we also used these meetings to better connect our Advisory Board Members to one another and to the I-STARR project through our recently developed I-STARR *intranet*, a virtual space where Advisory Board Members, I-STARR team members, pilot study directors, webinar presenters, and those who have completed the I-STARR training series, can exchange information and ideas.

Our Advisory Board members have also served as presenters at webinars and have assisted in sharing information about the project's activities, helping to increase the number of I-STARR newsletter subscribers (published quarterly). The I-STARR listserv (or network) consists of 725 subscribers\*, reflecting 434 recovery housing operators/providers, 251 researchers, and 98 subscribers affiliated through other CoARS projects (some subscribers belong to more than one category).

The I-STARR website continues to serve as a repository of information about the study activities, recovery housing resources (including a curated bibliography of the recovery housing literature by topic for researchers, trainees, providers, policy makers, and other stakeholders), upcoming events in the recovery housing field and the I-STARR *intranet*.

\*as of 12/10/24

## SUBSCRIBERS BY THE NUMBERS\*



\*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 has also supported the aims of these projects as well.

The study is registered on the HEAL Data Platform, and Dr. Mericle (contact mPI) has assisted the pilot study directors in registering their studies, linking them to the parent study, and preparing the data for deposit in the designated repository. She also attended the HEAL investigator meeting in February 2024.

Both Drs. Mericle and Masson (mPI) have regularly attended CoARS Steering Committee meetings. Dr. Mericle serves on the CoARS Webpage and Conference workgroup and Dr. Masson serves on the Mentoring and Training workgroup.

As a member of the Webpage and Conference workgroup, Dr. Mericle was instrumental in planning and organizing the inaugural 2024 National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science (NCARS), which included 42 breakout sessions, consisting of 11 symposia, 7 roundtables, and 24 poster presentations, addressing areas in recovery science ranging from DEI/health disparities to recovery capital and recovery support services.

Drs. Mericle and Masson also co-lead the newly developed Grant Development and Sustainability workgroup, which seeks to ensure robust engagement of member projects to support CoARS aims and activities.

**NIH**  
**HEAL**  
**INITIATIVE**

CoARS  
The Consortium on  
Addiction  
Recovery  
Science



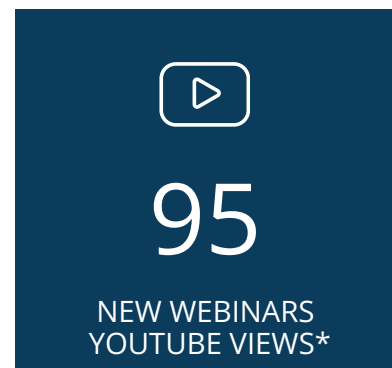
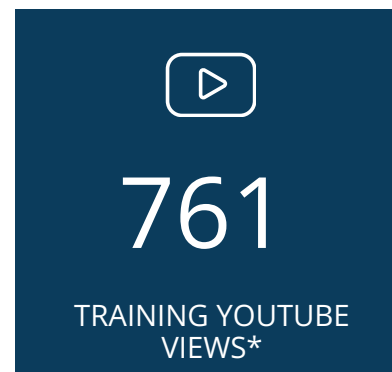
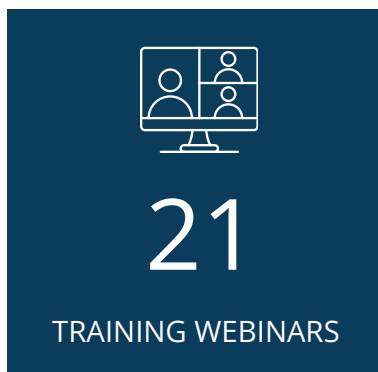
## AIM 2: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

As planned, we completed the 12-webinar training series in May 2024 and launched our ongoing monthly webinar series for all audiences in July 2024. The training series includes two distinct tracks, each with a total of 12 webinars: one track for researchers and another for operators/providers. Each track features nine webinars tailored specifically to their respective groups and both tracks include three webinars designed for both audiences.

Interest in these webinars has been generally high (ranging from 80 to 260 webinar registrants depending on topic and target audience), but in-person attendance has typically ranged from 30-120 live webinar attendees. To ensure that all interested people can benefit from webinars even if they cannot attend live sessions, we post recordings on the I-STARR website.

Additionally, we have integrated a learning management system module into the site, allowing registered participants a more interactive method to engage with the content at their convenience. For the entire training series, we have had 919 attendees and 761 views of the training webinars through our website. To date, seven individuals have participated in all 12 webinars in the training series (six in the Operator/Provider series; one in the researcher training series).

With the ongoing monthly webinar series that we launched in July 2024, we have so far had 5 webinars, with an average attendance of 37 participants per webinar.



\*Totals are cumulative

## AIM 3: SUPPORTING NEW AND EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS

In addition to providing ongoing support and mentoring to pilot study directors selected in the first year of the project (Rachel Winograd, PhD, Assistant Professor at the University of Missouri, St Louis and Jodie Dewey, PhD, Research Scientist at Chestnut Health Systems), we also issued another request for applications in October 2023 to support two new pilot studies.

Four individuals responded with a Letter of Intent about a proposed study. Key personnel on the project reviewed these letters and all 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, met in April 2024 and selected two applications: one put forth by Jennifer Miles, PhD, Instructor, Center for Health Services Research at Rutgers University and the other put forth by Adati Tarfa, PhD, Postdoctoral Associate in the Yale School of Medicine.

Dr. Miles's pilot study will fill key knowledge gaps in recovery housing resident MOUD utilization patterns by examining multilevel relationships between recovery housing organizational factors and resident MOUD utilization. Informed by recovery housing operators, Dr. Tarfa's mixed-methods pilot study will examine awareness, perceptions, and utilization of recovery housing among clients with OUD accessing the United States' first legal retail mobile pharmacy. This study will also explore pharmacists' knowledge of and perspectives on recovery housing for patients receiving MOUD.

### ROUND 1 PILOT STUDY AWARDEES



RACHEL WINOGRAD



JODIE DEWEY

### ROUND 2 PILOT STUDY AWARDEES



JENNIFER MILES

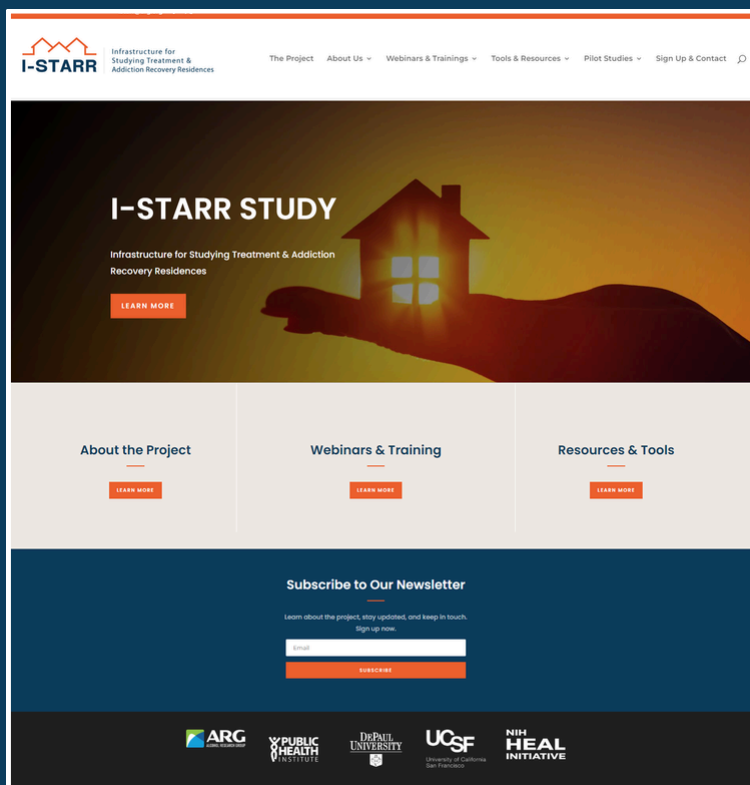


ADATI TARFA

# DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Members of the I-STARR Team have been actively engaged with a range of stakeholders, including researchers, providers, and policy makers to ensure that the field is informed of I-STARR goals and progress. MPI Mericle serves on the Advisory Board for the National Alliance for Recovery Residences. She also serves as a Community Board Member for the Justice-involved and emerging adult populations (JEAP) Initiative. Additionally, she presented on the I-STARR project at the NCARS conference, and chaired a symposium at the conference featuring findings from I-STARR Pilot Study Director, Rachel Winograd’s pilot study.

I-STARR project activities are also disseminated to stakeholders and wider audiences through our newsletters and project website. The website also serves as a repository for resources on the topic of recovery housing, particularly those persons prescribed MOUD. It also houses our Learning Management System for the researcher and operator/provider training series and an archive of all webinar videos.





# WHAT'S COMING UP IN YEAR THREE

In the next year, we will continue to address the aims of the project. We hold a minimum of two meetings with our Advisory Board. We will also continue to host monthly webinars and to promote completing the I-STARR training series through the learning management system on our website. In addition to supporting and mentoring pilot study researchers currently funded, we released another request for applications in November 2024 and will make decisions about funding of pilot studies in April 2025.

We will also organize meetings among recovery housing researchers at conferences attended by Dr. Mericle to facilitate networking among those new to the field and established recovery housing researchers. 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 Oxford House World Convention, CPDD, AHSR, etc.).

We are submitting a manuscript that highlights priorities for research on recovery housing and MOUD established by our Advisory Board and supporting our pilot study directors in the submission of manuscripts highlighting the findings of their work as well. Dr. Jodie Dewey is currently working on two papers highlighting findings from her pilot study: one that is under review and another that is in development. Members of the I-STARR team will continue to mentor pilot directors on additional publications and grant applications from their pilot studies as well as pilot study applicants on recovery housing related projects.



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.

To get the most up-to-date information on I-STARR activities and those in the recovery housing field, visit our website and stay connected with us through our social media accounts:



[istarr.org.org](http://istarr.org.org)

