

A dark blue silhouette of a house with a chimney and two windows, positioned on the left side of the cover.

I-STARR ANNUAL REPORT **YEAR THREE PROGRESS**

SEPTEMBER 30, 2024 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2025

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 highlights from the project's third year. We are proud to report that all stated objectives have been achieved, reflecting the talent and dedication of everyone involved.

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 the capability of recovery housing to support residents who are prescribed MOUD and to participate in effectiveness research as well as the capacity of 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 third year of the project, we have continued to strengthen our network by meeting with our 17-member Advisory Board twice annually. Board members play a vital role in supporting the project by presenting at webinars and helping to share information about our activities, which has contributed to a steady increase in I-STARR newsletter subscribers. To build capacity, we have maintained our monthly webinars, designed for a broad audience. Each session combines didactic content with interactive discussions, fostering meaningful engagement. All webinars are hosted and recorded on Zoom, and the recordings remain accessible on both the I-STARR website and YouTube channel. The website continues to serve as a central repository of information on study activities, recovery housing resources, and upcoming events, and we have enhanced its capacity and functionality to further support networking efforts. In addition to continuing support for awardees from the first and second rounds of pilot study funding, we provided grant funding to support an additional pilot study project this year.

These accomplishments have been made possible by the collective efforts of our team members: Co-Investigators Leonard Jason and Sarah Zemore; Biostatisticians Meenakshi Subbaraman and Libo Li; Communications Specialists Diane Schmidt and Dustin Khebzhou; and Project Coordinator Kwinoja Kapiteni. The guidance and expertise of our Advisory Board have also been instrumental to our success. 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

- Roland Lamb, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health (ret)
- Quyen Ngo, Hazelden Betty Ford Butler Center for Research
- D. Andrew Tompkins, San Francisco General Hospital
- David Pating, San Francisco Department of Public Health

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
- Doug Polcin, Public Health Institute

Overall, the project continues to meet its aims by building capacity for recovery housing research, with a particular emphasis on supporting individuals receiving MOUD in recovery housing. We have effectively grown a network of diverse stakeholders committed to expanding access to recovery housing, disseminated the latest recovery science to providers, researchers, trainees, and other key audiences, and supported emerging scientists in the field.

We look forward to building on this momentum in the coming year and to sharing future updates on the project's progress.

Amy & Carmen



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



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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AIM 1: NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Regarding our first aim to develop a diverse network of stakeholders dedicated to expanding access to recovery housing for persons prescribed MOUD, we continue to meet with our 17-member Advisory Board twice annually. 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 keeping the Advisory Board updated on study progress, we use these meetings to better connect our Advisory Board Members to one another and to the I-STARR project through the 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 currently consists of 697 subscribers*, reflecting 400 recovery housing operators/providers, 232 researchers, and 92 subscribers affiliated through other CoARS projects (note: some subscribers belong to more than one category).

The I-STARR website continues to serve as a repository of information about 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), and upcoming events in the recovery housing field. Over the past year, the site had 2.1K active users who generated 6.9K page visits and 21K total interactions (clicks, video plays, form submissions)*. In the past year, 2.1K active users visited the site, generating 6.9K page visits and 21K interactions (clicks, video plays, form submissions). I-STARR also applies a multi-channel dissemination strategy to extend reach and deepen engagement among the I-STARR network. We distribute a quarterly newsletter, produce an annual report, and promote training opportunities through community dissemination partners and active social media accounts on Facebook, BlueSky, Instagram and LinkedIn.

*as of 9/15/25

SUBSCRIBERS BY THE NUMBERS*



*Some subscribers belong to more than one category 3

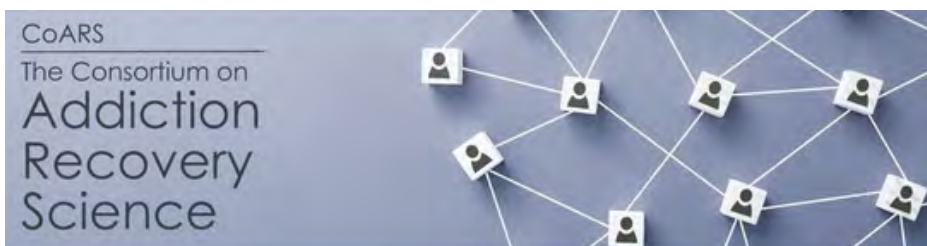
AIM 1: NETWORK COLLABORATION

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 I-STARR 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.

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 2025 National Conference on Addiction Recovery Science (NCARS), which included opening and closing keynote panels, 5 symposia, 8 roundtables, and 44 poster presentations. I-STARR team members were well-represented at the conference. MPI Mericle moderated the closing keynote panel, featuring I-STARR Co-Investigator Zemore. Dr. Mericle also moderated a symposium featuring I-STARR Biostatistician Subbaraman and I-STARR Pilot Study Directors Jodie Dewey and Justin Bell. MPI Masson co-led a roundtable entitled “Guiding the Next Generation of Leaders in Recovery Science Research.” I-STARR Co-Investigator Jason presented in a roundtable about involving concerned significant others as recovery partners and assets, and I-STARR Pilot Study Director Adati Tarfa presented a poster highlighting preliminary findings from her research. This year’s NCARS meeting also included a mentor/mentee matching component and opportunities for researchers to interface with national recovery advocacy organizations and professional associations.

Drs. Mericle and Masson also co-lead the CoARS Grant Development and Sustainability workgroup, which seeks to ensure robust engagement of member projects supporting CoARS aims and activities. Members of the workgroup have provided support to eight investigative teams seeking funding through larger-scale mechanisms (i.e., P50, U24, R01, R25, and R61/R33) and four teams seeking funding through smaller-scale mechanisms (i.e., R03, R34, and R41/R42).

NIH
HEAL
INITIATIVE



AIM 2: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

We have also made progress on our aim to increase the capability of recovery housing to support residents who are prescribed MOUD and to participate in effectiveness research as well as the capacity of researchers who are trained to conduct it.

We completed the 12-webinar training series in May 2024 and launched our ongoing monthly webinar series for all audiences in July 2024, which continues to-date. All webinars contain a mix of didactic and audience participation components and are hosted and recorded on Zoom, with recordings accessible and available on both the I-STARR website and our I-STARR YouTube channel. Since the launch of this component, the I-STARR project has hosted a total of 21 trainings and 14 webinars.

The I-STARR training series consists of 12 webinars and has two tracks: one for operators or providers of recovery housing and another for researchers who are new to studying recovery housing. Since its launch, our training series has attracted 2,576 registrants, with 791 attending live sessions and with 907 additional views on YouTube across both training tracks. To enhance the experience of those enrolled in the trainings series, we designed a customized Learning Management System (LMS). On the LMS, 57 users have registered, resulting in 145 total webinar views. Of those registered, nine participants completed the full operator/provider series, and one participant completed the researcher track.

For the ongoing webinar series, we have had 1,639 registrants, with 483 attending live and 312 additional views on YouTube since the last reporting period. In-person attendance for individual trainings and webinars has typically ranged from 20 to 120 participants.



21

TRAINING WEBINARS



791

TRAINING ATTENDEES*



907

TRAINING YOUTUBE
VIEWS*



14

NEW WEBINARS



483

NEW WEBINARS
ATTENDEES*



312

NEW WEBINARS
YOUTUBE VIEWS*

AIM 3: SUPPORTING NEW AND EARLY-CAREER INVESTIGATORS

With respect to our third aim, to provide opportunities for early-stage investigators and those who may be new to recovery housing research to collaborate with recovery housing researchers, we have also continued to make progress.

In addition to providing ongoing support and mentoring to pilot study directors selected in the first round (Rachel Winograd & Jodie Dewey) and second round (Adati Tarfa & Jennifer Miles), we issued another request for applications in November 2024 to support new pilot studies. Three individuals responded with a Letter of Intent about a proposed study and two were invited to submit full applications. The Pilot Study Review Committee, consisting of key personnel and a subset of the Advisory Board who have led NIH-funded research, met in May 2024 to evaluate each proposal's scientific merit, feasibility, and potential impact.

The Committee selected one application, submitted by Dr. Justin Bell, post-doctoral fellow at Chestnut Health Systems, as a candidate for funding. Dr. Bell's pilot study proposes to conduct a secondary analysis of data from a Chicago-based low-barrier recovery home (LBRH) program evaluation to assess differences in outcomes for residents with opioid use disorder (OUD) and to identify key components of LBRH services by conducting qualitative interviews with staff from two LBRH programs in Chicago and Los Angeles. In consultation with his I-STARR mentorship team (Drs. Leonard Jason and Sarah Zemore), Dr. Bell submitted a revised version of his proposed pilot study protocol on June 13, 2025. The proposal was approved for funding on June 19, 2025 by mPIs, Drs Mericle and Masson.

In addition to formally mentoring I-STARR pilot study directors, I-STARR team members provide mentoring to all pilot study applicants to enhance likelihood of success in securing future funding and to connect with others in the field. In October 2024, the I-STARR project hosted a networking lunch with established and early-stage recovery housing researchers attending the annual Addiction Health Services Research (AHSR) conference in San Francisco.

ROUND 1 PILOT STUDY AWARDEES



RACHEL WINOGRAD



JODIE DEWEY

ROUND 2 PILOT STUDY AWARDEES



JENNIFER MILES



ADATI TARFA

ROUND 3 PILOT STUDY AWARDEES



JUSTIN BELL

DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

During the reporting period, we have been actively engaged with a range of stakeholders (e.g., researchers, providers, and policy makers) to keep them abreast of project goals, activities, and progress. As noted above, the team was actively involved in several presentations at the NCARS this year. Dr. Mericle also frequently presents on the status of recovery housing research to a variety of different audiences. In July, she presented to the University of Missouri St. Louis Substance Use Research Group, which is comprised of addiction, substance use, and public health professionals and researchers and to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health on the national recovery housing landscape and the state of recovery housing research.

Additionally, in the past year, I-STARR Pilot Study Director Dr. Rachel Winograd presented findings from her pilot study during an I-STARR webinar and at the 2024 Association for Multidisciplinary Education and Research in Substance use and Addiction's (AMERSA) annual conference; members of Dr. Winograd's team also presented findings at the Collaborative Perspectives on Addiction meeting and at the 2025 College of Problems of Drug Dependence meeting. I-STARR Pilot Study Director Dr. Jodie Dewey also presented findings from her pilot study in an I-STARR webinar and at the 2024 AHSR annual conference. I-STARR project activities are also disseminated to stakeholders and wider audiences through our newsletters, project website, and social media platforms.



A LOOK AHEAD TO YEAR FOUR

In the next year, we will continue to address the aims of the project, meeting twice annually with our Advisory Board to discuss goals and initiatives, strengthen our network of recovery home researchers, and ensure progress.

We will continue collaboration efforts within the larger network of recovery housing researchers through participating in HEAL activities and taking an even larger role in CoARS network activities by submitting an administrative supplement to support and coordinate CoARS activities throughout the duration of the I-STARR project.

In order to expand training efforts for new recovery housing researchers, we will continue to host monthly webinars and encourage completion of the I-STARR training series through our new Learning Management System.

In addition to continuing to support and mentor currently-funded pilot study researchers, we will be releasing another request for pilot study applications in December 2025, and will make funding decisions in April 2026. Like we did at the Addiction Health Service Research Conference last fall, we will also organize meetings among recovery housing researchers at conferences to facilitate networking between those new to the field and established recovery housing researchers.

We will continue dissemination efforts through promoting the I-STARR project and activities in our newsletter, on our project website, and at stakeholder conferences (e.g., the Oxford House World Convention, CPDD, AHSR, etc.).

Finally, in addition to working with pilot study directors to publish findings from their work, we plan to submit a manuscript with Advisory Board Member Reif that highlights recovery housing's place in health services research, as well as a manuscript with Co-Investigator Zemore on how definitions of recovery among those whose primary substance is opioids may vary depending on whether they identify as being in medication-assisted recovery.



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

