

Welcome to the Division on Addiction's Winter Quarterly Newsletter!

Announcements



The Division on Addiction is proud to announce a new set of resources for emerging adults! These resources will provide emerging adults encountering gambling opportunities, and professionals working with them, practical information to reduce harm. [Click here](#) to access the materials.



Left to right: Justin Huynh, MPH; Kira Landauer, MPH; and Nakita Sconsoni, MSW at TD Garden

The 13th annual Gambling Disorder Screening Day was recently held on March 10, 2026! This year, we held screening events at CHA Cambridge Hospital, the Enterprise Center during a St. Louis Blues game, and at TD

Upcoming Events

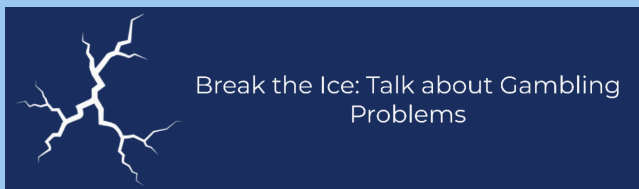


On April 23, Dr. Heather Gray will present at the 49th Annual Governor's Conference on Behavioral Health, sponsored by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Learn more and register [here](#).

Drs. Debi LaPlante and Sarah Nelson will present at the 19th International Conference on Gambling & Risk Taking hosted by the [University of Nevada, Las Vegas International Gaming Institute \(IGI\)](#). On May 26, Dr. LaPlante will present, "A New Look at Open Science Principles and Practices in Gambling Studies" as part of a discussion on Research Methodology & Open Science, and Dr. Nelson will present, "First Face for Tribal Gaming: Adapting a Culturally-Grounded Mental Health Training for Tribal Casino Employees" as part of a discussion on Special Populations. [Click here](#) to register and learn more.

Garden during a Bruins game. We are grateful for the support and participation from organizations and individuals worldwide who continue to make Gambling Disorder Screening Day a success!

Outreach Corner



Several gambling resources are available on the Division on Addiction website to help individuals self-check for potential gambling-related problems and get the help they need. [Click here](#) to start learning how gambling may affect you or someone you know and get resources for help.

Flash Poll



Did you participate in Gambling Disorder Screening Day this year?

Yes

No

Did you know?



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In extreme cases, substance misuse can lead to suicidality. But how does misuse of opioids, including prescription medicines, relate to suicidality? To address this question, [Seungbin Oh and colleagues](#) recently analyzed data from a survey of nearly 37,000 young adults in the United States. Overall, 8.5% of participants reported suicide ideation and 1.9% reported a suicide attempt in the previous year. These rates were higher among participants who reported prescription opioid misuse: 13.9% reported suicidal ideation and 4.1% reported a suicide attempt. Polysubstance use—i.e., misusing prescription opioids along with other illicit substances—was linked with even higher risk for suicide. For example, participants who reported misusing prescription opioids alongside three or more illicit substance use had with 3.6 higher odds of having a suicide attempt in the previous year compared to participants who did not report substance use. These findings highlight the need for specialized interventions addressing co-occurring issues and suicide-prevention messaging aimed at individuals who may misuse prescription opioids and other substances. Read more about this study at [The BASIS](#).

Research Spotlight



Research Spotlight

[xaʔtúʔ \(First Face\) for Mental Health](#) is a community-empowering training program designed to prepare community members to help one another with mental health or substance use crises. Recently, staff at the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations, an Indigenous-focused youth residential treatment facility in Spokane Valley, Washington, completed First Face training. Members of the [Center for Indigenous Research, Collaboration, Learning, and Excellence](#) evaluated these trainings, and their results were published in the [American Journal of Orthopsychiatry](#).

Pre- and post-training surveys revealed that after First Face training, both clinical and non-clinical staff showed increases in mental health/substance use knowledge and reported more confidence to respond to a mental health or substance use crisis. Trainees also reported high satisfaction with the training and had strong intentions to use the skills learned in their professional and personal lives. However, mental health stigma did not improve after training. Although First Face was culturally tailored for Native American trainees, the evaluation revealed that non-Native trainees also benefitted.

These findings indicate that First Face is a promising, culturally responsive intervention for helping residential treatment staff become more capable in responding to health crises. Further, the program has now become a routine part of staff onboarding at the Healing Lodge. If you'd like a full copy of this article, contact us at info@divisiononaddiction.org.

Dr. Heather Gray, who led the study, says, "We were encouraged to see that trainees had more understanding of mental health and addiction concepts after completing their First Face training, as well as more confidence in providing aid to others, should the situation arise. We need to keep studying whether First Face training reduces stigma towards people with mental health or addiction challenges, possibly using different instruments. Another future direction is to explore how long these beneficial training effects last and whether trainees would benefit from a 'booster' program."

Meet the Team

Justin Huynh

Community Health Educator I

[Justin Huynh, MPH](#) is a Community Health Educator I at the Division on Addiction. He joined the Division in February 2026. Mr. Huynh supports multiple capacity building and outreach projects including the [Cambridge Health Alliance Readiness for Gambling Expansion \(CHARGE\)](#) initiative; is a content manager and writer for [The Brief Addiction Science Information Source \(The BASIS\)](#) research blog; and develops the Division's quarterly newsletter. Outside of work, he enjoys playing banjo, attending concerts, and watching movies.

Learn more about our faculty and staff here.

Our Latest Publications

Edson, T. C., Tom., M. A., & LaPlante, D. A (2026). Investigating the impact of loss accumulation periods on the predictive relationship between loss chasing and potential gambling harms. *Addictive Behaviors*, 175.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2026.108605>

Ghaharian, K., Dragicevic, S., Percy, C., Nelson, S. E., Murch, W. S., Heirene, R. M., Simeon-Rose, K., & Schrans, T. (2026). The need for benchmarks to advance AI-enabled player risk detection in gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 10.1007/s10899-026-10483-6. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-026-10483-6>

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Browse our research library here.

Our Latest Research Snapshots

Albanese, M. J., Nelson, S. E., Peller, A. J., & Shaffer, H. J. (2010). [Bipolar disorder as a risk factor for repeat DUI behavior](#). *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 121(3), 253–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2009.06.015>

Shaffer, H. J., Nelson, S. E., LaPlante, D. A., LaBrie, R. A., Albanese, M., & Caro, G. (2007). [The epidemiology of psychiatric disorders among repeat DUI offenders accepting a treatment-sentencing option](#). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(5), 795–804. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.75.5.795>

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