

Division on Addiction 2025 Annual Report



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Letter from the Director



Greetings!

We're excited to share with everyone a summary of work that we have been busy with during the past year. Although academic science and research continues to face unprecedented challenges in the U.S., we are pleased to report that we have been able to continue to focus on our mission, delivering high quality research, education, training, and outreach about addiction. As you will see from the sections that follow, we have been able to continue to advance our work related to Driving While Impaired, addiction recovery among youth, and gambling-related public health impacts. Our ability to continue to advance these important areas of focus is helped by our partnerships, including collaborative relationships with the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations, Health Resources in

Action, and Greo, among others. The Division naturally has a very collaborative work style for our internal activities and we're so pleased to have been able to foster a strong network of partnerships that also favor collaborative work for our externally-connected activities. The work we do together to understand addictive behavior is essential to building a more complete understanding. It is my hope that during the next year, we will continue to nurture these relationships and build new relationships with likeminded partners. I look forward to navigating this path with the Division faculty and staff.

Notably, as we continue to forge ahead, we recognize that our long-time Director, Dr. Howard Shaffer has officially retired from his position. Read more about this important transition in our Feature section on page 14. We cannot say how grateful we are to Howard and everything he has done for the Division since 1992. His impact will continue despite this change.

As always, thank you for following our work, for your support, and joining us on our mission.

Debi A. LaPlante, PhD
Director, Division on Addiction
Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Research & Resource Projects

Responsible Gambling & Gambling Harm

Project Title: First Face for Tribal Gaming Employees

PI: Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

Funder: International Center for Responsible Gaming

This two-year grant supports the adaptation and evaluation of *καρτός* (First Face) for Mental Health, for Tribal gaming employees. During 2025, we began adapting the training with the guidance of a Tribal gaming working group. Future work will include a trial of the adapted training at two Tribal casinos.

Project Title: Evaluating the Massachusetts Voluntary Self-exclusion Program (MA-VSEP) Gambling Risk Detection

PI: Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Gaming Commission via Greo

The Division is partnering with Greo to conduct an evaluation of the Massachusetts Voluntary Self-exclusion Program (MA-VSEP). To date, activities have included quick scans of the literature, data collection from MA-VSEP participants, and interviews with entities that collaborate with MA-VSEP. The Division is responsible for collaborating with Greo on the design of the evaluation, conducting surveys and interviews with MA-VSEP staff and participants, and collaborating on data analysis, manuscripts, and reports.

Project Title: Responsibility, Research, and Resources: 2025 Plan for Responsible Gambling Activities

PIs: Debi A. LaPlante, PhD & Heather M. Gray, PhD

Funder: DraftKings, Inc.

This one year contract supported responsible gambling consultation, education, and training. During 2025, with this support, we consulted about gambling harm, safer gambling practices, and responsible gambling interventions; published free addiction science research reviews on the Division's Brief Addiction Science Information Source (BASIS) research blog (basisonline.org); expanded the Division's annual Gambling Disorder Screening Day activities; held data science seminars with DraftKings staff; and advanced continuing education activities related to Gambling Disorder.

Research & Resource Projects

Responsible Gambling & Gambling Harm

Project Title: Exploring a Lottery-promoted Gambling Disorder Screening Day Intervention

PIs: Debi A. LaPlante, PhD & Heather M. Gray, PhD

Funder: International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG)

This one-year grant supported a study of online digital screening for Gambling Disorder. During 2025, we completed data collection resulting in samples of 124 individuals recruited in partnership with the Hoosier Lottery and 880 individuals recruited through Amazon's MTurk. We also completed data analyses, presented our findings at the ICRG's annual conferences, and began drafting a scholarly article.

Project Title: Multidimensional Loss Chasing in Online Gambling: Considering the Importance of Optimal Cutpoints, Temporal Reference Points, and Coming in Hot for Improving Predictive Ability

PI: Timothy C. Edson, PhD

Funder: International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG)

During 2025, our team submitted and published the manuscripts for Aims 1 (optimized loss chasing thresholds) and 2 (optimized loss chasing loss accumulation periods) associated with this project in peer-reviewed academic journals (*Journal of Gambling Studies* and *Addictive Behaviors*, respectively). We also began drafting the pre-registration for Aim 3 (the last major Aim) associated with this project (assessing starting behaviors as antecedents to problematic loss chasing), and plan to have all major deliverables for this project completed before Fall of 2026.

Project Title: Examining Responsible Gambling Advertising Practices and Testing Effects of Actual Responsible Gambling Messages on Behavior

PIs: Seth P. McCulloch, PhD & Eric R. Louderback, PhD

Funder: International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG)

This project examined over 300 responsible gambling messages created by industry operators and public health agencies in the United States. Work also included an experimental study of responsible gambling messages conducted via YouGov. During 2025, we completed data collection for these projects and conducted data analyses. We are in the process of preparing multiple manuscripts for publication.

Research & Resource Projects

CARS (Computerized Assessment & Referral System)

Project Title: Streamlining Computerized Assessment & Referral System (CARS)

PI: Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

Funder: Responsibility.org (Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility)

During 2025, the Division finished a major update to the Computerized Assessment & Referral System (CARS), a mental health screening and assessment tool first developed with funding from Responsibility.org (previously known as the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility) for use within impaired driving programs. The update streamlines the tool to shorten the tool into a single comprehensive screening module, customize impaired driving content, and improve usability. In parallel with this update, the Division has worked directly with Responsibility.org and Spinutech, a digital marketing and website development agency, to create a version of CARS accessible in the cloud. Additionally, with Responsibility.org's support, the Division created nine research snapshots, each one-page infographic summarizing one of the Division's papers on impaired driving and mental health.

NARCH (Native American Research Centers for Health)

Project Title: Assessing Cultures of Recovery in Tribal Communities

Proj. Leads/Pis: Debi A. LaPlante, PhD (Administrative Core); Sarah E. Nelson, PhD (Research Core); Heather M. Gray, PhD (Capacity Building Core); Timothy C. Edson, PhD (Pilot Project)

Funder: National Institutes of Health (National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institute of Mental Health, and National Institute on Drug Abuse) via The Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations (Grant No. 1S06GM146095)

During 2025, the Division continued its collaboration with The Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations (HL) funded by a Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The award, Assessing Cultures of Recovery in Tribal Communities (NARCH XII), entered its fourth year in 2025. We continued follow-up survey activities with trainees and community surveys. Preliminary analyses indicated high program satisfaction and significant improvements in mental health knowledge, perceived competence to respond in a mental health situation, and situational judgment. We wrote up and submitted our initial findings to a peer-reviewed journal and are working on two additional manuscripts related to the study. The Division expanded its capacity building work with the Healing Lodge's Training and Research Coordinators (TRCs) through small-scale, supervised research projects and structured train-the-trainers activities. As a result of these activities, the TRCs have become better prepared to engage in a variety of independent training and research endeavors.

Education & Outreach Projects

Project Title: Statewide Capacity Building and Technical Assistance for Problem Gambling Treatment Services

Proj. Director: Heather M. Gray, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services via Health Resources in Action

Since 2020, the Division has collaborated with Health Resources in Action (HRIa) to develop and implement the Massachusetts Technical Assistance Center for Problem Gambling Treatment (M-TAC). In 2025, the Division co-developed and co-presented trainings on the topics of screening and assessment for problem gambling services, promoting problem gambling treatment services, Gambling Disorder treatment best practices, cultural humility in clinical treatment, and more. The Division also co-developed several health education resources.

Project Title: M-TAC Expansion

Proj. Directors: Heather M. Gray, PhD & Debi A. LaPlante, PhD

Funder: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services via Health Resources in Action

The Division on Addiction worked with Health Resources in Action (HRIa) to develop a set of enduring materials: Your Second Step to Change (designed for individuals who have made an initial step toward changing their gambling behavior and could benefit from strategies to help them solidify and maintain those positive changes and take additional steps); The Massachusetts Approach to Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment (a training activity for court professionals who might have a role to play in reducing gambling harm); and Taking Steps for Self-Care (an evidence-based booklet designed for those affected by a loved one's gambling).

Education & Outreach Projects

Project Title: Customizing Problem Gambling Prevention Resources for the Everett Haitian Community

PIs: Nakita Sconsoni, MSW & Caitlyn Matykiewicz, MPH

Funder: National Council on Problem Gambling

To address the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate problem gambling prevention resources in communities exposed to gambling opportunities, the Division partnered with the Everett Haitian Community Center (EHCC) to develop a problem gambling prevention booklet and Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen pocket screeners. These Haitian Creole-translated resources were disseminated throughout the Everett community and their impact was assessed by pre- and post-surveys. We presented an overview of the grant and the survey findings at a State of the Community event at EHCC.

Project Title: Special Series on Education to Promote Lower-risk Drinking, Gambling, and Substance Use

PI: Kira Landauer, MPH

Funder: Greater Boston Council on Alcoholism

This grant supported the development, dissemination, and evaluation of a month-long Special Series on Education to Promote Lower-risk Drinking, Gambling, and Substance Use, published on our addiction research blog, The BASIS. Throughout May 2025, we featured summaries of peer-reviewed research and expert op-eds focused on evidence-based lower-risk guidelines, public awareness and use of these guidelines, and strategies for communicating them effectively. We also conducted a reader survey to better understand our audience, gather feedback, and identify opportunities to improve The BASIS.

Peer-reviewed Publications

Cho, S. J., Gainsbury, S. M., **LaPlante, D. A., Louderback, E. R.**, Nguyen, S., D'Souza, M., & Heirene, R. M. (2025). CONSORT Adherence among randomised controlled trials in the behavioural addictions literature: A systematic review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 12(1), 63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-025-00676-1>

Czakó, A., Potenza, M. N., Hodgins, D. C., Yu, S. M., Wu, A. M. S., Jiménez-Murcia, S., Bowden-Jones, H., King, D., Billieux, J., Bóthe, B., Stein, D. J., Gambling Research Priority Setting Consortium, & Demetrovics, Z. (2025). Research priorities in gambling: Findings of a large-scale expert study. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 14(3), 1222–1249. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.2025.00072>

*Drs **LaPlante** & **Nelson** were invited members of the international consortium of gambling research experts who contributed to the paper and research priorities.

Edson, T. C., Louderback, E. R., Tom, M. A., & LaPlante D. A. (2025). Multidimensional loss chasing among online gamblers: Assessing optimized thresholds for the prediction of gambling harm. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. 41(4), 1443–1467. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-025-10391-1>

Gray, H. M., Barlow, D., Bird, E., Bliesner, M. R. S., Campbell, B., Jones, R. R., **LaPlante, D. A.**, & Whelshula, M. (2025). Evaluation of the xaʔtúʔ (First Face) for Mental Health program at a youth residential addiction treatment facility. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000899>

Gray, H. M., & Edson, T. C. (2025). Interpersonal factors associated with suicide ideation among gamblers. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors: Journal of the Society of Psychologists in Addictive Behaviors*, 39(1), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0001058>

Gray, H. M., & Edson, T. C. (2025). Perceived burdensomeness partially mediates the longitudinal relationship between problem gambling and suicidal ideation. *Addictive behaviors*, 172, 108527. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2025.108527>

Gray, H. M., McCullock, S. P., Slabczynski, J. M., Siu, A. M., & LaPlante, D. A. (2025). Development and validation of the Responsible Drinking Inventory. *Psychological Assessment*. 38(3), 187–202. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pas0001428>

LaPlante, D. A., Louderback, E. R., Ghaharian, K., & Abarbanel, B. (2025). Revisiting gambling research contributors' use and views of open science principles and practices: A brief report. *International Gambling Studies*, 25(1), 192–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2025.2456797>

Louderback, E. R., McCullock, S. P., & LaPlante, D. A. (2025). Cryptocurrency trading, day trading, and gambling behavior: Examining the moderating effects of financially focused self-concept and gambling motives. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 41(1), 67–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-024-10343-1>

Nelson, S., Seitz, J., Stodloa, M., & Konschak, C. (2025). Breaking the cycle of impaired driving recidivism: Screening and assessment for mental health and substance use. *Between the Lines*, 33(7).

Xu, T. P., Kraus, S. W., Abarbanel, B., **Louderback, E. R., Gray, H. M., LaPlante, D. A.**, & Bernhard, B. J. (2025). Examining the relationship between casino employee gambling involvement, demographic characteristics, and responsible gambling program perceptions. *UNLV Gaming Research & Review Journal*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.9741/2327-8455.1493>

Continuing Education Activities

The Gambling & Recovery Podcast Science Accelerator Course

Funder: DraftKings, Inc.

The Gambling & Recovery Podcast Science Accelerator Course consists of 1-hour Continuing Education (CE) modules designed to provide evidence-based and lived-experience insight into the experience of gambling-related problems. In each module, learners will listen to a recent *After Gambling Podcast* episode hosted by Jamie Salsburg, with special guest Mark Checkwicz, followed by a discussion of related research. Learners can earn 1.0 hour of CE credit per module. In 2025, the Division prepared two additional modules and began work on a third. All three new modules will be launched in 2026.

The Brief Addiction Science Information Source (BASIS) Microlearning Course

Funder: DraftKings, Inc.

The Division on Addiction developed and launched The Brief Addiction Science Information Source (BASIS) Microlearning Course, a free educational opportunity for allied health professionals to learn about addiction research and its implications for treatment and public health. This online course currently covers research findings from 2016 through 2024 and offers 36, one-hour continuing education modules that offer the opportunity to learn more about addiction research and its implications for treatment and public health. Learners can earn 1.0 hours of CE credit per module. In 2025, the Division added the newest four modules of this course.

Academic Presentations

CARS & Driving While Impaired

Initial Development of a Computerized Mental Health and Wellness Screening Tool for Older Adults

Annette M. Siu, BA, John M. Slabczynski, BA, Debi A. LaPlante, PhD, Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Poster Session)

Harvard Psychiatry Research Day and Myself Lecture

Screening for Mental Health Challenges in DUI Populations: The Computerized Assessment & Referral System (CARS)

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

Washington Courts

Administrative Office of the Courts Webinar Series

Mental Health & Impaired Driving Research, Practice, and Policy: The “What” vs. the “How”

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD, Julie Seitz, MSW, Judge Kate Huffman (Panel Presentation)

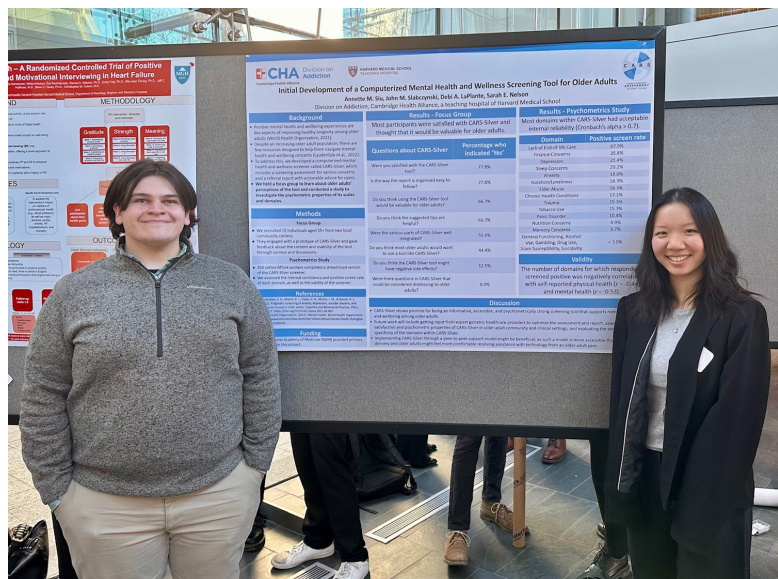
National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving Webinar Series

Screening and Assessing for Mental Health Challenges in the DUI Population: A Hands-on Demonstration of the Computerized Assessment & Referral System (CARS)

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Skill-Building Workshop)

All Rise Annual Conference for Treatment Court Professionals: RISE25



Harvard Psychiatry Research Day and Myself Lecture (left to right): John M. Slabczynski, BA & Annette M. Siu, BA

Academic Presentations

CARS & Driving While Impaired

Mental Health and Impaired Drivers

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College Impaired Driving Symposium

The Computerized Assessment & Referral System (CARS): Updates and Future Directions

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

Responsibility.org Board Meeting

Jeopardy Isn't Just a Game Show

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Panelist)

Governors Highway Safety Association Annual Meeting

Mental Health & Alcohol

Julie Seitz, MSW, Sarah E. Nelson, PhD, Judge Kate Huffman

(Two-Session Panel Presentation)

Maryland Highway Safety Office: Maryland Highway Safety Summit

Responsible Gaming and Gambling Disorder Screening Day

What's the Deal with AI and Gambling?

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

*International Center for Responsible Gaming Training for Healthcare Providers:
Gambling Addiction - Trends in Treatment, Public Health, and Gambling*

BREAK THE ICE! An Overview of Gambling Disorder Screening Day

Debi A. LaPlante, PhD

Sponsored by Draftkings, Inc.

Academic Presentations

Responsible Gaming and Gambling Disorder Screening Day

Involvement vs. Escalation: Gambling Trajectories among Highly-Involved and Less-Involved Sports Gamblers

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Symposium Presentation)

Long Odds and Long-Term Risks: Using Longitudinal Designs to Examine Sports Betting Behaviors and Consequences Symposium

Collaborative Perspectives on Addiction Annual Meeting

Screening and Diagnostic Testing

Kira E. Landauer, MPH

(Panelist)

Emerging Adults Gambling Summit

AI and Gambling: Hype, Reality, and Where We're Headed

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD &
Heather M. Gray, PhD (moderated by
Debi A. LaPlante, PhD)

(Invited Presentation)

Massachusetts Office of Problem Gambling Services Annual Problem Gambling Conference

Self-harm in Problem Gambling: The Role of Interpersonal Factors and Implications for Treatment

Heather M. Gray, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

Sponsored by: Responsible Gaming Association of New Mexico



Massachusetts Office of Problem Gambling Services Annual Problem Gambling Conference (left to right): Heather M. Gray, PhD, Debi A. LaPlante, PhD, & Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

Academic Presentations

Responsible Gaming and Gambling Disorder Screening Day

Measuring the Effectiveness of Responsible Gambling Messaging

Debi A. LaPlante, PhD & Heather M. Gray, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

World Lottery Association

Do Immediate, Daily, Weekly, Monthly, or Cumulative Losses Maximize the Predictive Relationship between Loss Chasing and Gambling Harms?

Timothy C. Edson, PhD

(Panel Presentation)

International Center for Responsible Gaming 2025 Annual Conference

Responsible Gambling Advertising: Characteristics, Efficacy, and Users' Content Preferences

Seth P. McCulloch, PhD

(Panel Presentation)

International Center for Responsible Gaming 2025 Annual Conference

Detecting Risk in Online Gambling Environments: Development Targeted Responsible Gaming

Matthew Tom, PhD

(Panel Presentation)

International Center for Responsible Gaming 2025 Annual Conference

Insights about Digital Screening for Gambling-related Problems

Debi A. LaPlante, PhD

(Panel Presentation)

International Center for Responsible Gaming 2025 Annual Conference

YOUR SECOND STEP TO CHANGE: An Overview of a New Gambling Self-help Workbook

Debi A. LaPlante, PhD

(Webinar with lived experience advisory panel)

Health Resources in Action

Academic Presentations

Addiction in Tribal Communities

Building Cultures of Recovery in Tribal Communities

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD & Raisa Jones, MBA

(Invited Presentation)

Responsible Gaming Association of New Mexico Annual Conference on Problem Gambling

Research Methods

Ethics in Research and as Researchers

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Guest Speaker)

Cambridge Health Alliance Residency Research Methods Seminar

Machine Learning: Hype, Promise, & Limitations

Sarah E. Nelson, PhD

(Panel Presentation)

AI in Action: New Frontiers in Gambling Panel

International Center for Responsible Gaming 2025 Annual Conference

Alcohol

Drinking Responsibly: Validating a Measurement for an Ambiguous Construct

John M. Slabczynski, BA, Seth P. McCulloch, PhD, Debi A. LaPlante, PhD, Heather M. Gray, PhD, Annette M. Siu, BA, Howard J. Shaffer, PhD

(Poster Session)

Harvard Psychiatry Research Day and Myself Lecture

Development and Validation of the Responsible Drinking Inventory

Heather M. Gray, PhD

(Invited Presentation)

Cambridge Health Alliance Department of Psychiatry Research Meeting

Feature

Retirement of Howard J. Shaffer, PhD, CAS



Howard J. Shaffer, PhD, CAS announced his retirement after more than 50 years of research and clinical service in the field of addiction. Dr. Shaffer served as Director of the Division on Addiction (Division) for more than 25 years and as Harvard Medical School faculty for several decades. He also served as Director of the Center for Addiction Studies at Harvard Medical School and the Cambridge Hospital Department of Psychiatry. Shortly after being appointed Division Director in 1995, Dr. Shaffer secured [the first-ever research grant](#) from the National Center for Responsible Gaming (now the International Center for Responsible Gaming), which resulted in [transformative research](#) on gambling, gaming, and addiction more broadly. Around the same time, the American Gaming Association approached Dr. Shaffer about the prospect of conducting a study focusing on the epidemiology of gambling in the United States, the outcome of which ultimately catapulted gambling studies on an international scale. Dr. Shaffer also served in various leadership and advisory roles outside the Division, including as Editor for both the *Journal of Gambling Studies* and *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*.

To learn more about Dr. Shaffer's career and robust contributions to the field of addiction, visit our [Special Series in Honor of Dr. Howard Shaffer](#).

Websites

Division on Addiction Main Website (divisiononaddiction.org)

The hub of Division activities, including our research projects and library, education and training opportunities, plus outreach and other resources. Open Science products (e.g., Research Snapshots) can also be found here.

Division on Addiction's Online Courses (divisiononaddictioncourses.org)

The Division established its own website of free, online continuing education (CE) courses, offered to a diverse group of learners including health care providers, policy makers, and scientists. We currently offer 3 courses, The BASIS Microlearning Course, Science Literacy in Your Addiction Practice, and The Gambling and Recovery Podcast Science Accelerator Course – for a total of 40.5 CE credits. New modules of The BASIS Microlearning Course and the Gambling and Recovery Podcast Science Accelerator Course will be added in 2026!

The BASIS Website (basisonline.org)

The BASIS is an academic blog that minimizes addiction's harmful effects by providing the general public, treatment providers, policy makers, and others with access to addiction research. Each week, The BASIS summarizes a current, peer-reviewed addiction science article and, throughout parts of the year, supplements these summaries with editorials written by people in recovery, clinicians, researchers, policy makers, and others. By discussing addiction and related mental health conditions openly and encouraging compassion, tolerance, acceptance, and hope, The BASIS works to reduce the stigma often associated with addiction and support health equity.

CARS Training Center (carstrainingcenter.org)

The Computerized Assessment and Referral System (CARS) is an easy-to-use computer guided interview that includes comprehensive psychosocial and mental health assessments. The CARS website is a one-stop-shop to download and start using the CARS software, including a Help Center.

The Transparency Project (thetransparencyproject.org)

The Division's public-facing data repository that contains codebooks, data sets, and code that others can use to replicate the Division's work or test their own research ideas in the Division's data.

Expressions of Addiction (expressionsofaddiction.com)

The Division's online exhibit of original photographic portraits that depict people in various stages and expressions of addiction. The Division builds and maintains all of its own websites.

Faculty & Staff

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Research Coordinator

John Slabczynski, BA

Research Associate

Matthew Tom, PhD

Research Data Analyst
Associate in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Division on Addiction 2025 Partners

We are grateful to our research and education partners outside the Division, including, but not limited to:

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CIRCLE Director
Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations

Brett Abarbanel, PhD

Associate Professor/Executive Director
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Alex Blaszczyński, PhD

Professor Emeritus
The University of Sydney

Elda Mei Lo Chan, PhD

Director, St. John's Cathedral Counselling Service
University of Hong Kong

Mark Checkwitz

Husband, Father, Gambler on the fringes of harm, WSOP Bracelet Winner

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Founder and Leader of the Technology Addiction Team, Brain & Mind Centre
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