THE CENTER ON ALCOHOLISM, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND ADDICTIONS
25 years generating high quality prevention and treatment research

University of New Mexico
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CASAA exists because

- Addictive behaviors are common
- Alcohol and drug use affects health
- Alcohol and drug use affect public safety
- Alcohol and drug use affect economic productivity
- Addictive behaviors are one of the major sources of preventable illness, injury, and death

New Mexico has:
  - Higher than the national rate of illicit drug use (11.25%)
  - Drinking-related deaths that are 50% higher than the national average
  - A rate of deaths from drug overdoses that is twice the national average
CASAA’s mission

- CASAA exists to conduct high quality scientific research to advance knowledge necessary to improve prevention and treatment, and to reduce suffering related to substance use and other addictive behaviors.

- Research at CASAA focuses on problems of social importance.

- CASAA investigators maintain the highest standards of scientific integrity and are committed to integrating issues of human diversity into their research.

- CASAA values transdisciplinary approaches to research problems, and sharing of research products with the larger scientific community.

- CASAA also works to facilitate the translation of empirical knowledge into real world applications that will improve the quality of life, not only in the State of New Mexico, but also in other states and nations.
CASAA by the numbers

- 25 years of research, training, and service
- 46 different Principal Investigators
- $131,379,040.58 in total grant and contract dollars
- ~250 undergraduate and graduate students trained
What has CASAA contributed?
CASAA benefits to New Mexico

- We conduct research on problems of importance to NM – drinking and driving, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), how to provide better treatments for alcohol problems among AI/AN populations
- We conduct research to develop better ways to implement state laws related to drinking and driving
- We conduct research to help illicit drug users
- We bring money to the state through research grants
- We work with community treatment providers to develop better methods to treat persons with alcohol/drug problems
CASAA benefits to New Mexico

- We train community treatment providers on effective ways to prevent and treat alcohol and drug problems
- We host national and international conferences that many New Mexicans attend
- We work with other higher education institutions across NM to better address drinking among college students
- Our faculty and staff serve on committees of state government to lend our expertise to policy decisions
- We provide financial support and research mentoring to undergraduate and graduate students at UNM
What have we learned from CASAA research?
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

- Well-defined, objective criteria can be used to identify children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorders
- Risk factors for FASD go beyond drinking, and include: family history of alcohol abuse, early heavy drinking, early nutritional deficits, and drinking and smoking during pregnancy
- Pregnant women can be motivated not to drink; this is good for their babies
Prevention

- Science can help reduce DWI fatalities
- We can use technology to improve prevention efforts
- We can motivate alcohol- and marijuana-using adolescents to change their behavior
  - These interventions also are cost-beneficial
- Prevention messages work with NM college students
  - They will reduce their risky drinking
  - They will increase their use of protective strategies to avoid trouble when they do drink
Treatment

- Motivation is a state of mind that can be influenced. You don’t have to wait for a person to “be ready” to change.
  - Health care professionals, therapists, and concerned family members all can enhance motivation.
- Listening to how clients talk in therapy and supporting what they say about commitment to change has an impact on outcomes.
- Involving families improves outcomes for adolescents and adults.
- Twelve step programs and treatments to help patients get involved with these programs are effective.
  - The more involved a person is, the better they do. Working the steps and sponsorship are particularly important.
Treatment

- Medications can contribute to recovery from dependence on alcohol or opiates, but counseling is needed as well.
  - Keeping inmates on methadone maintenance therapy during incarceration reduces recidivism.
- New approaches to change, such as mindfulness, are promising.
- Studying the brain helps us understand more about addiction and change.
- We have excellent research methods that allow us to keep track of persons with alcohol and drug problems after treatment, and to accurately assess their drinking and drug use.
Specific populations

- With proper treatment and support, groups seen as hopeless can be helped to change their substance use and improve their lives
  - Runaway adolescents
  - Homeless women
  - Women in welfare-to-work

- We can work collaboratively with Native American groups to adapt treatments so that they are based on scientific finds and are culturally respectful and congruent

- Native Americans have the highest rates of abstinence of any ethnic group, and use positive strategies to do so

- Heavy drinking affects the brains of women more than men
The future

- Continue to do what we do well: research, training, and service, and:
  - Treat addictions where we find them
    - Primary health care settings
    - Criminal justice system
    - School-based health programs
  - Conduct research to impact health disparities
  - Use novel technologies for prevention and intervention
  - Use behavioral neuroscience to better understand how people change
  - Better understand the economics of prevention and treatment
Thank you