



# A MATTER OF SUBSTANCE: AT-A-GLANCE

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## DIVISION QUICK FACTS

### March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month:

This year's campaign theme is "**Problem Gambling: Have the Conversation.**" Many of the clients presenting to treatment for drug and alcohol problems also have a gambling disorder or are at risk for developing one. Studies show approximately 30% of individuals in substance use disorder treatment also have current or lifetime gambling disorders; and 50% of individuals in treatment for gambling disorders have current or lifetime problems with alcohol, tobacco and other substances.

Counselors should *have the conversation* with their clients about gambling. In many instances it is necessary to **ask** as clients may not offer this information voluntarily. They may feel guilt or shame; they may consider it a "money problem", not a gambling problem. You won't know if you don't ask!

Resources for screening, assessment and treatment of gambling disorders are available at the National Council on Problem Gambling website at [www.npgam.org](http://www.npgam.org). A list of IDPH-funded gambling treatment providers can be found [here](#).

### April is Alcohol Awareness Month:

Along with many others across the country, IDPH will recognize Alcohol Awareness Month in April. Founded by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), Alcohol Awareness Month seeks to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. This year's theme is, "**Talk Early, Talk Often: Parents Can Make a Difference in Teen Alcohol Use.**"

Alcohol is the most widely used substance in Iowa, including for those seeking assessment for possible substance use disorder problems. According to the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), Iowa ranked 6th among the 50 states and District of Columbia for the percentage of adults who binge drink. Underage alcohol use is also a problem in Iowa. Approximately 16% of 8th graders surveyed in 2014 reported using alcohol before turning 13 (Iowa Youth Survey). The survey also showed that 23% of 11th graders, 6% of 8th graders, and 2% of 6th graders reported alcohol use in the past 30 days. While current alcohol use has decreased for each grade since 1999, use by youth remains a concern.

If you are interested in promoting Alcohol Awareness Month or hosting an event, go to NCADD's [website](#) and download the Alcohol Awareness Month Organizer's Guide.

### Brain Injury Screening:

There seems to have been an increase in media attention on brain injuries, with the recent release of the Will Smith film "Concussion" and the report that former Hawkeye Tyler Sash had an advanced form of CTE — Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. Brain injury is also getting more attention within the military, as one of the "signature injuries" of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

While brain injury is a frequent medical condition co-occurring with substance use disorders, the complications resulting from brain injury — changes in thinking, language, behavior and emotions — may not be readily apparent. Individuals with a brain injury may be wrongly characterized as "non-compliant" because of consistent failure (or inability) to complete tasks, a disinterested appearance, or repetition of behaviors that are considered socially inappropriate. Counselors can screen for brain injury history by asking questions such as "Have you ever hit your head or been hit on the head?", or "Have you ever been knocked out or become dazed because of an injury to your head?" Other screening questions can be found at [HELPS TBI screening tool](#).

The IDPH Brain Injury Program has released several reports addressing the incidence and prevalence of brain injury in Iowa, including the [TBI in Iowa 2016 Brief](#). These reports can be found at <http://idph.iowa.gov/brain-injuries>. More information is also available through the Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa at 1-866-444-6443 or [info@biaia.org](mailto:info@biaia.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**39th Annual Governor's Conference on Substance Abuse Pre-Conference Sessions** April 18, Des Moines.  
Veteran's Memorial - Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center. For more information, go to [www.trainingresources.org](http://www.trainingresources.org).

**39th Annual Governor's Conference on Substance Abuse** April 19-20, Des Moines.  
Veterans Memorial - Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center. For more information, go to [www.trainingresources.org](http://www.trainingresources.org).

For more information about the Division of Behavioral Health, visit [www.idph.iowa.gov/bh](http://www.idph.iowa.gov/bh)

For questions related to "A Matter of Substance," contact the editors:  
Kevin Gabbert [kevin.gabbert@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:kevin.gabbert@idph.iowa.gov) or Julie Hibben [julie.hibben@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:julie.hibben@idph.iowa.gov)