

New NIAAA Strategic Plan Aims to Advance Behavioral Treatments for Alcohol Abuse

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The [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#), one of NIH's 27 institutes and centers and a leading funder of basic and applied psychological science at NIH, released a new strategic plan detailing the institute's priorities over the next five years. A key area of focus is to better understand the role behavior plays in alcohol use and abuse—as is the value of behavioral treatments in treating misuse of alcohol.

“Alcohol misuse still claims the lives of 88,000 Americans each year, making it the fourth-leading preventable cause of death in the United States,” said NIAAA Director and APS Fellow [George F. Koob](#) in introducing the new aims.

One of NIAAA's five primary goals is to develop and improve treatments for alcohol misuse, alcohol use disorder, co-occurring conditions, and alcohol-related consequences. One of the main objectives toward the goal explicitly targets behavior, emphasizing that NIAAA should improve existing behavioral treatments for alcohol use disorders and co-occurring conditions, and should develop new behavioral treatments based on advances in basic behavioral research and neuroscience.

“Cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational therapy, community reinforcement, family and couples therapy, and brief interventions have consistently been found to reduce rates of heavy drinking,” the plan reads. “Additional research is needed to identify novel mechanisms of behavior change, further elucidate those that have empirical support, and translate this knowledge into new and improved treatments.”

To meet its behavioral treatment goals, NIAAA pledges to support research to enhance effectiveness of behavioral therapies, examine novel behavioral interventions, and use electronic health technologies to improve effectiveness, accessibility, and use of behavioral interventions.

The importance of behavioral science in understanding alcohol abuse and alcoholism is interwoven through NIAAA's other strategic plan goals, too, including the identification of the mechanisms that lead to alcohol abuse, diagnosis and tracking of alcohol misuse, and broadening the public health impact of NIAAA-supported research.

You can read a summary of NIAAA's new strategic plan [here](#). And scientists who are interested in NIAAA support for their research can visit NIAAA's “[Funding Opportunities](#)” page, which includes [many program announcements of interest to psychological scientists](#).