

# NIH Encourages Studying the Social Contagion of Substance Abuse

January 13, 2020



The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has issued a Notice of Special Interest inviting grant applications proposing to study the social contagion of behavior and substance abuse. Proposed research should apply *social network theory*—the study of how people, organizations, and groups interact in a network—in its work. According to NIDA, social network theory and analysis have aided in the study of other recent public health issues.

Social contagion, defined by NIH, is the “spread of affect or behavior from person to person and among larger groups.” NIDA recognizes “social network theory can also be applied to chronic behavioral conditions, including substance use disorders, and social factors and their interactions with age and sex are important determinants of substance use.”

Models that examine how substance abuse and peer use/misuse develops in peer groups should make use of big data sets and data science to form computational models required for social network analysis.

NIDA has expressed interest in this research area for applications submitted from February 5, 2020 through January 8, 2023.

[To learn more about NIDA's Notice of Special Interest: Modeling Social Contagion of Substance Use Epidemics \(NOT-DA-20-009\), click here.](#)

*Do you know NOSI? NIH uses [notices of special interest](#) (NOSI) to stimulate research in high-priority and high-opportunity areas of science. They highlight interest in a research area that does not have set-aside funds or special review criteria or review considerations.*