

History of the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center

In 1970, the Cedar Rapids Public Library conducted a community survey to find out what kinds of information the citizens wanted or needed. The study revealed there was a demand for drug and alcohol abuse information.

Cedar Rapids Public Library Board of Trustees approved the library's first grant application, proposed by Community Services Librarian Lee Hayden, to the Iowa State Drug Abuse Authority in December 1972. The grant would be matched with in-kind services from the Library.

The funding allowed the utilization of the public library as the resource center for drug abuse in Iowa, as the State Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information and Materials. Services began in 1973, and in the first six months the center received 138 requests.

Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center (ISAIC) was originally named Iowa Drug Abuse Information Center. In 1978, 'Drug' was replaced with 'Substance'.

Craig Wunderlich served as the first project director. Vicky Dunn replaced Wunderlich in 1979. Tressa Youngbear served as the director from 1985 to 2005. Barb Gay is the current program manager.

November of 1996, ISAIC began providing distribution services for Iowa Department of Public Health programs, in addition to the substance abuse program. Currently, ISAIC provides distribution services for 20 additional IDPH programs from the ISAIC Clearinghouse location on 5th Street SE in Cedar Rapids.

Problem gambling became a contracted service in July 1997. ISAIC now offers a variety of problem gambling materials in addition to reference assistance.

The Drug and Alcohol Helpline became available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through collaboration with Foundation 2 Crisis Center in December, 2000. This continuing partnership provides ISAIC with 24/7 phone coverage, and the ability to transfer calls to a crisis counselor during regular business hours.

Current services have been expanded to include the treatment and prevention provider database as well as a training calendar and list of current professional job openings. ISAIC continues to serve as a statewide resource center on substance abuse and problem gambling, with funding provided to the Cedar Rapids Public Library from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

ISAIC's staff, four full time and two part-time library employees, facilitates the distribution of four million pieces of information from the Clearinghouse annually, researches reference questions, answers over 100 phone requests per week on the Drug and Alcohol Helpline, and loans more than 200 books, videos, DVDs, and teaching resources each month to parents, teachers, students and professionals from across the state.

The Website, DrugFreeInfo.org, ISAIC's information and referral venue on the Internet, averages over 200,000 visits per month. ISAIC is also responsible for two other sites, RedRibbonIowa.org and RecoveryIowa.org

Iowans can access services in person at the Cedar Rapids Public Library, on the web, or by phone 1-866-242-4111. All services are free and confidential.