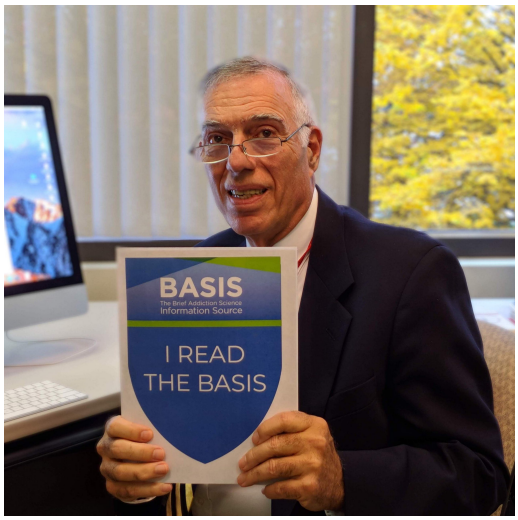
Announcing Dr. Howard Shaffer's Retirement

January 31, 2025



Dear readers of The BASIS,

Today marks the retirement of Dr. Howard Shaffer from his position at the Division on Addiction as a distinguished faculty member and the inaugural Morris E. Chafetz Associate Professor of Psychiatry in the Field of Behavioral Sciences at Harvard Medical School. As the current Editor-in-Chief, I write to express my sincere appreciation for Howard's contributions to The BASIS, the Division on Addiction, and the field of addiction science more generally.

Howard and Tom Cummings created The Weekly Addiction Gambling Education Report (The WAGER), precursor to The BASIS, in 1996. The WAGER had humble beginnings; it started as a one-page fax sent to policy makers, a process that took 14 hours each week! But the work was worth it – Howard, Tom, and everyone else who contributed to The WAGER understood that the emerging science of gambling and gambling-related problems could inform more effective gambling policies. Nearly 30 years later, much has changed but our guiding principle remains the same: to make scientific information about addiction easily available and understandable to non-scientists. It's been my honor to advance this mission over the last several years.

Howard's service to the field goes well beyond his founding of The WAGER and The BASIS. For instance, his development of the Syndrome Model of Addiction has challenged conventional wisdom about the nature of addiction. Blending his clinical expertise with scientific rigor, he produced original research that

advanced our understanding of Gambling Disorder and other expressions of addiction.

Later this year, The BASIS will dedicate a month of content to Howard's lasting impact on the field. Some of us who've been lucky enough to call Howard a mentor will reflect on what he taught us. Stay tuned! And Howard, thank you for your unwavering commitment to improving the lives of people touched by addiction. We're grateful.

Sincerely,
Heather

Heather Gray, Ph.D.
Director of Academic Affairs, Division on Addiction
Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

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Dear supporters of the Division on Addiction,

I am writing to you today to convey Dr. Howard Shaffer's official retirement announcement from his position at the Division on Addiction as a distinguished faculty member and the inaugural Morris E. Chafetz Associate Professor of Psychiatry in the Field of Behavioral Sciences at Harvard Medical School. To say that I have mixed feelings about this transition is an understatement. Howard has been a vital member of the Division since its founding, as a leader, researcher, mentor, educator, and colleague. We will miss his day-to-day presence keenly, even if we continue to benefit from our ongoing relationship with him and everything we have learned from him.

Beyond the Division, Howard has been central to the advancement of addiction treatment and research through his own work as a clinician and researcher; his service to the field, including acting as editor for both *Journal of Gambling Studies* and *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*; and innovative outreach efforts, such as *The WAGER*. Howard's work has pushed boundaries and stimulated much thought about the nature of addiction. From his book, *Quitting Cocaine*, which challenged conventional understanding about addiction, to countless research and clinical publications, to the two-volume American Psychological Association's

Handbook of Addiction Syndrome, Howard has sought to provide new insights into addiction, blending clinical and research perspectives. His contributions to gambling research continue today, as his notions about responsible gambling continue to provoke vigorous debate and his epidemiological work establishing prevalence rates and describing the natural history of Gambling Disorder provide enduring influence on the field.

The Division has been so fortunate to have had Howard contribute his wisdom, strength of character, and zeal for scientific rigor for so many years. His impact on us will continue for years to come, as we strive to match his contributions. Through his example we will endeavor to make our own contributions to addiction science that are thought-provoking, influential, and practical.

Later this year, the Division will be editing a special series through *The BASIS* reflecting on Howard's work. Subscribe to *The BASIS* to be sure you don't miss it. And thank you for your support of the Division on Addiction as we work to improve the lives of people touched by addiction, inspired by Howard's example.

Sincerely yours,
Debi

Debi A. LaPlante, Ph.D.
Director, Division on Addiction
Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School