

OFFICE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The State Legislature established the Office of Problem and Pathological Gambling, known as the Office of Problem Gambling (OPG), in August 2003, to reduce the prevalence of problem and pathological gambling. The first priority of OPG was to develop a statewide plan for a problem-gambling prevention program that includes:

- A toll-free telephone service for crises intervention and referrals for assistance
- Public awareness campaigns
- Empirically driven research program
- Training for health care professionals and educators, and training for law enforcement agencies and nonprofit organizations
- Training for gambling-industry personnel in identifying customers at risk for problem gambling and informing them of referral and treatment service

Major OPG accomplishments include:

Statewide Strategic Plan

- Established an Advisory Group and conducted a series of meetings inviting input for development of a statewide plan addressing problem-gambling issues. Members of the Advisory Group include problem-gambling service providers, legal experts, and representatives from the gaming industry, researchers, and State agencies. OPG plans to maintain an ongoing Advisory Group to discuss progress and provide input for future efforts.
- OPG's Statewide Plan was released in November 2006.

Toll-free Helpline Services

- Funded a toll-free statewide helpline, with translation abilities; and a Chinese-language helpline, exclusively for the San Francisco area.
- OPG and the California Lottery partnered to combine the two respective Problem Gambling Helplines into one toll-free statewide helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER.

Training

- Established ongoing statewide training and technical assistance for community organizations, social workers, and mental health and substance abuse providers regarding problem gambling awareness and prevention.
- In June 2008, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Program's Office of Problem Gambling, California State Lottery, and Department of Justice's Bureau of Gambling Control were sponsors of the 22nd National Conference on Problem Gambling. The world's oldest and largest conference on problem gambling and responsible gaming was held in California for the first time.

Public Awareness

- Established an informational website listing assistance resources.
- Developed and printed prevention materials for youth, parents, senior citizens, and college-age young adults.
- Contracted with San Diego State University (KPBS TV/FM) to develop radio spots, scripts/storyboards and oversight needed for a focus group. These radio spots were produced in English, Spanish and Cantonese.

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Public Awareness-continued

- Initiated radio and outdoor print campaigns, in multiple languages, designed to raise public awareness of problem gambling and helpline services.
- OPG and the California Lottery partnered to translate and print responsible-gambling information in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean for distribution at lottery outlets. The National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA) formed a coalition of multilingual, multicultural providers and worked with OPG to develop literature addressing problem gambling. The materials were translated into widely spoken Asian languages and are available free through the ADP Resource Center.
- OPG contracted with the Tulare County Office of Education/California Friday Night Live Partnership (FNL) to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of five youth-oriented problem gambling prevention activities focusing on middle and high school youth throughout the State of California's FNL system. The project objective, to raise awareness among young people and their parents about the risks of gambling, was met and exceeded through youth-led dramatic presentations, youth-led videos, art contest, handouts and brochures for parents, and supplemental classroom activities. These accomplishments were compiled on a DVD that has been distributed throughout the state of California.
- Problem Gambling Awareness Week (PGAW). The OPG continues to spearhead California's PGAW campaign to increase awareness of problem gambling during this nationally recognized week. Representatives from the Department's of Justice and Mental Health, CA Horse Racing Board, CA Lottery, CA Gambling Control Commission and CA Council on Problem Gambling collaborate annually to educate Californians about the signs of problem gambling and how to get help.

Research

- Completed a Situational Assessment of Problem Gambling Services in California (March 2006); the report identifies issues and challenges related to problem gambling services in California.
- Commissioned a prevalence study of problem gambling in California. This study was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and is the largest study of its kind ever conducted, at state level, in the United States. The Prevalence Study was completed in June 2006.
- OPG is working closely with the Problem Gambling Studies Program at UCLA to develop and evaluate cost effective best practices for providing intervention services to problem gamblers.
- Contracted with the Regents of the University of California/UCLA Gambling Studies Program for the creation and efficacy testing of a self-help workbook. The workbook is available on the OPG website in English and Spanish.
- Contracted with the Regents of the University of California/UCLA to develop and test the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral treatment for pathological gamblers. After the development of a treatment manual, a 5 year longitudinal study in a community treatment setting will be conducted.
- Contracted to analyze data from the 11th California Student Survey. As a result of this analysis more suitable problem gambling questions will be incorporated into future California Student Surveys.

Office of Problem Gambling
Treatment Services
"Stepped Services Approach"

Brief Interventions

- Self-help workbook (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese); additional languages in the future
- Telephone Counseling "Call to Change"; possible additional languages

Mental Health Treatment Providers

- Accelerated launch of existing providers
- Train providers for problem gambling issues
- Set up reimbursement program
- Provide "tool kit" with Cognitive Behavioral Treatment Manual
- Supervisors for new providers

Intensive Outpatient Clinic/Residential Center

- Referrals for those who need more intensive treatment from individual providers
- Use to evaluate efficacy of treatment programs

Provide a menu of services through 1800GAMBLER
Continue to refer to Gamblers Anonymous and GAMANON
Target specific communities for cultural competence
Target bi-lingual counselors
Community partners for outreach