

Journal Information  
Journal ID (publisher-id): jgi  
ISSN: 1910-7595  
Publisher: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Article Information  
© 1999-2001 The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Received Day: 13 Month: October Year: 2000  
Publication date: February 2001  
Publisher Id: jgi.2001.3.13  
DOI: 10.4309/jgi.2001.3.13

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## Problem gambling Service

*This Service Profile was not peer-reviewed.*

The *Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: eGambling* invites clinicians from around the world to tell our readers about their problem gambling treatment programmes. To make a submission, please contact the editor at [phil\\_lange@camh.net](mailto:phil_lange@camh.net).

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### Programme description:

The Problem Gambling Service (PGS), a Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) program, is the only mainstream problem gambling treatment program in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). All services are offered on an outpatient basis. It provides counselling to gamblers and family members who are concerned about the effects of gambling on their lives.

We offer one-to-one counselling, marital and family counselling, telephone counselling (18% of our clients choose phone counselling; of these, 72% are female) and weekly groups. Family members may be seen with or without the gambler, and separate groups are available to them. The Corrections Program operates on-site at three correctional facilities, offering group and individual counselling.

Five populations (youth, older adults, women, corrections and ethno-cultural groups) receive special attention from the PGS for problem gambling awareness, education, research and clinical programming.

## **Philosophy of Service:**

Our service is client-centred and extremely easy to access: clients need no referral and generally speak to their counsellor during their first phone contact. We use a harm reduction approach.

Treatment modalities include motivational, cognitive-behavioural and solution-focused counselling, as well as relapse prevention techniques. Weekly education and support groups have utilized a LifeSkills format, as well as a process-oriented approach.

## **Profiles of Our Services**

### **Staff:**

The staff come from Social Work, Addictions and Psychology backgrounds, with six full-time equivalent addiction therapists. The PGS works closely with CAMH educators, scientists, and writers to produce and disseminate information about problem gambling.

### **Description of Our Clients:**

Last year, the PGS provided service to 25% of all Ontarians who presented for treatment. For the entire province, these were: 315 men (70%), 133 women (30%). Fifty eight percent self-reported a primary ethnic identification other than Canadian.

Games that our clients identified as problematic were: casino table games, track betting, private card games, slot machines, sports betting, lotteries, bingo, scratch cards and Nevada tickets.

### **Outcomes:**

Based on 1999 outcome measures, 72% of clients contacted one year after treatment either maintained their goals, further reduced their gambling behaviour or experienced only minor relapses.

### **Research Involvement:**

Four PGS staff are the principal investigators on seven funded research projects:

- youth prevention study: an interactive presentation and performance presented to approximately 450 students in the GTA
- gender study: 400 gamblers are being surveyed to determine gender-related differences in gambling populations
- research on provincial treatment needs and barriers for women gamblers
- Project Weathervane: with the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive

Gambling (Ontario), this study surveys Ontarians' attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and gambling behaviours

- research on the experience of winning among non-problem and problem gamblers
  - validation of the Inventory of Gambling Situations, an instrument that helps identify risk situations for relapse
  - research on the efficacy of a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor in the treatment of gambling disorders.
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- Service\_Profile