

Document 3: Gambling Prevention Programs and Treatment Services

There are a number of local, provincial and national agencies providing gambling prevention programs and treatment services.

Local Prevention Programs and Treatment Services

There are five community agencies providing prevention and treatment services for problems with gambling in Ottawa.

- The YMCA Ottawa's Youth Gambling Awareness Program (YGAP) is the only local program solely focused on gambling awareness and prevention. YGAP offers bilingual gambling prevention messages to youth, teachers, community groups and parents. YMCA Ottawa's YGAP leverages partnerships with The Dave Smith Centre, Maison Fraternité and Children's Aid Society to reach higher risk youth. Recently, YGAP developed a new workshop on Mental Health and Stigma related to gambling problems and is conducting outreach to alternative schools with higher-risk youth.
- Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre offers a confidential and free program to women with problem gambling who live in the Ottawa region. The program is a two-year outpatient program, allowing women to live at home.
- Centertown Community Health Centre (CCHC) hosts the Lifestyle Enrichment for Senior Adults (LESA) which offers in-home counselling and group support for senior adults (55+) experiencing problems related to the use of alcohol and other psychoactive drugs, and gambling. CCHC also promotes Problem Gambling Prevention Week (PGPW), a program offered by the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC). CCHC has stated that it conducts approximately 10 prevention presentations per year.
- Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services offers counsellor-led support groups for individuals with gambling problems and for friends and family members of people experiencing problems with gambling. One-on-one counselling is also available on a fee-for-service basis. Rideauwood works in all high schools and can support students with problem gambling through counsellors in schools
- Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (SHCHC) delivers individual and group counselling for gambling problems, as well as an access point to the OLG self-exclusion program in collaboration with local casinos.

These five community agencies, along with OPH, are members of the Problem Gambling Coordinating Committee (PGCC). They meet on a quarterly basis to enhance coordination and availability of treatment options for people with gambling problems in the City of Ottawa. The PGCC has identified gaps in prevention messages and a lack of awareness of the harms related to gambling which may contribute to lower numbers of individuals and families seeking help than the population estimates of need suggest.

Part of OPH's plan, as indicated in the attached report, is to establish a new network of key stakeholders that will work collaboratively to increase awareness of the harms related to gambling, to improve informed decision making about gambling and to implement interventions to prevent gambling harms across the continuum of use.

Other local services that support individuals experiencing problems with gambling and their families include the Distress Centre, Gamblers Anonymous and credit counselling:

- Gamblers Anonymous is an international organization where people come together and share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from a gambling problem. An Ottawa Chapter organizes meetings at various locations throughout the week.
- The Distress Center of Ottawa & Region works within the continuum of mental health services by providing suicide prevention, crisis intervention, psychological stabilization, emotional support, information, referral and education services, to individuals in need. The Distress Center is a volunteer organization that operates 24/7.
- Credit counselling services are available in Ottawa for individuals with debt problems. Counselling includes debt management programs, individual counselling, group seminars and budget training.

In July 2017 and again in February 2018, community agencies providing prevention and treatment services were consulted about the services they currently provide, wait times, and prevention efforts. Overall findings were similar to 2013:

- Funding for treatment programming has not changed in the past 10 years. This has resulted in agencies adapting services or referring clients to other local programs for help.

- Each treatment agency has developed their own niche in counselling services. For instance, Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services provides group sessions; SHCHC provides Smart Recovery groups and links clients to OLG's Self-Exclusion program while Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre and Sandy Hill provide more one-on-one individual support.
- Some agencies have combined group sessions for families with other addiction issues, such as substance use, due to low numbers.
- Most agencies stated that individuals seeking help for problem gambling are prioritized as they are considered high risk. All clients seeking support are connected immediately with a counsellor by phone. Depending on wait times, most clients are seen within 5 days for an in-person counselling session.
- Most treatment providers mentioned that some clients receiving problem gambling counselling also report other co-morbidities including substance use and mental illness.
- Most agencies stated they do not have capacity to provide health promotion activities. Many agencies expressed the need to promote the warning signs of the harms from gambling, as many people experiencing problems with gambling either do not know they have a problem or where to get help. However, most of these agencies do not receive dedicated funding for promotion efforts.
- Service providers have expressed the need for a coordinated approach in addressing problem gambling.
- There is no residential treatment facility for people with problem gambling and/or technology/gaming addiction in the City of Ottawa.

Provincial Programs and Services

Based on Ontario government policy, two percent of gross slot revenues earned at casinos and slot facilities are allocated to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The Ministry uses these funds to support research, treatment and prevention programs, including:

- The Champlain LHIN which funds six Health Service Providers (HSP) across the region including Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services, Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre and Sandy Hill Community Health Centre.

- Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario, led by CAMH, brings treatment professionals and leading researchers together with experts in communicating and sharing knowledge. The focus is on collaboratively developing and sharing evidence-based solutions to gambling related problems, within Ontario. They also lead the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline. In 2017, the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline received close to 200 calls from Ottawa residents.
- Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO) is an independent knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Their goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in the development and implementation of responsible gambling policies, standards, and practices. Their work is geared towards a number of stakeholders including researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators, and operators, as well as treatment and prevention service providers. Carleton University Gambling Laboratory is a member of GREO's knowledge hub.

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission Prevention Programs

OLG generated \$7.45 billion in revenue in 2015-2016; \$38 million was directed to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for problem gambling prevention, treatment and research and \$15.6 million was directed to OLG to programs to prevent harms from gambling, including Responsible Gaming Resource Centres, policy and program development, staff training and self-exclusion capital costs.

Some of OLG's prevention programs include:

- *Play Smart*: a responsible gambling program that works to prevent and mitigate problem gambling and provide player support by linking them to services and resources. It is evidence-informed, designed and delivered in collaboration with multiple agencies, including CAMH, the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC), GREO and Credit Canada Debt Solutions. Some of the *PlaySmart* resources include:
 - *PlaySmart* Centres, currently branded as Responsible Gaming Resource Centres (RGRC), which provide patrons with information on safer gambling practices as well as assistance and local referrals for help with gambling-related problems. Operated by the Responsible Gambling Council, the Centres are independent and information provided to the RGRC is confidential. RGRCs are located at OLG Slots and Casinos, and Charitable

- Bingo and Gaming Centres across Ontario. One such “centre” is located in the Rideau Carleton Raceway and Casino.
- *PlaySmart* – an on-line resource providing Ontarians with comprehensive gambling education about how games work.
 - The Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) is an independent non-profit organization committed to problem gambling prevention. RGC works to reduce gambling risks by creating and delivering innovative awareness and information programs. It also promotes the adoption of improved play safeguards through best practices research, standards development and the *RG Check* accreditation program. Some of the RGC programs include:
 - *Problem Gambling Prevention Week (PGPW)* <http://knowthesigns.ca/know-the-signs/> is a program that focuses community attention on the risks of gambling, ways to limit those risks, realistic expectations of winning and losing and where to get help. *PGPW* brings together stakeholders who want to reduce the risk of problem gambling, including local counselling agencies, governments and gambling providers. Traditionally this program has not been highly visible in Ottawa.
 - *GAME BRAIN* is an interactive and educational game show style presentation that highlights the risks of gambling, how to avoid these risks and where to get help. It is presented to students and educators across Ontario. The program is request driven and has not come to Ottawa since 2015.

National Prevention Initiatives

- The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) is the only organization with a national mandate to reduce the harms of both gambling and substance use. According to the CCSA, there is a lack of, and need for, evidence-informed Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines (LRGGs) to help individuals who gamble make well-informed and responsible decisions about their gambling behaviours and to help and support social networks to identify people with problem gambling. CCSA is in the process of establishing a governance framework including co-chairing and hosting a National Low-Risk Gambling Advisory Committee and a Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines Scientific Working Group. The goal is to have a final technical report by the end of 2020 providing the best available evidence in support of LRGGs.