



NEW SURGEON GENERAL REPORT FOCUSES ON ADDICTION

FACING ADDICTION IN AMERICA

*The Surgeon General's Report on
Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

The recently released *Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health* highlights addiction as one of the most important health concerns facing Americans. The report includes a section on the economics of prevention with information provided by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. Although gambling prevention is not mentioned per se, the benefit per dollar cost of similar prevention programs is noted and ranges up to \$64. For example, the prevention program Project Towards No Drug Abuse is estimated to provide a benefit of \$6.54 for every dollar spent. It's logical to expect that programs aimed at the prevention of problem gambling have the potential to have a similar impact. For reference, the full report may be found at addiction.surgeongeneral.gov.

GAMBLING AMONG TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S SENIORS

The changing gambling beliefs and behaviors of Minnesota seniors figure to play a significant role in the potential increase in compulsive gambling for this growing segment of the population. Surveys of Minnesotans' gambling behavior, conducted each year since 1995, suggest changing trends between today's seniors (those born before 1946) and tomorrow's seniors (those born between 1946 and 1964).

Todd Maki, research analyst for the Minnesota Lottery, analyzed survey data collected by St. Cloud University to learn more about the gambling behaviors of older adults in Minnesota. Here are several of the key findings:

Moral Opposition to Gambling Has Decreased. The percent of Minnesota seniors who are personally opposed to gambling for moral or religious reasons dropped from 50 percent in 1995 to 28 percent in 2016. Similarly, the percentage of

those who believe that gambling should be outlawed in Minnesota dropped from 42% to 17% over the same period.

Casinos and Slot Machines Are Favorite Forms of Gambling for Seniors. Ninety-two percent of Minnesotans born before 1946 have gambled, with 66 percent reporting gambling in the past year (2016). Eighty percent had gambled in local casinos while 71 percent had played slot machines. Only two percent of respondents reported gambling on sports events or fantasy sports.

Number of Senior Gamblers in Minnesota Is Significant. Roughly 400,000 of the approximately 450,000 Minnesotans born before 1946 have gambled. This is a significant number and, based on the historic incidence of problem gambling in the general population, suggests that the number of older adults with gambling problems is considerable.

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Cathie Perrault
Executive Director
NPGA

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

We thank all our members, donors, volunteers and affiliates who have contributed to our mission.

Become a member today. Visit www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org to join us.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Penetrating the Noise

As the director of an organization responsible for creating community awareness about an important issue, I sometimes feel that our efforts are akin to chipping away at an iceberg with a small ax. We live in a world where we're drowning in information, and I don't know many people who wish they received more emails or newsletters or who want to see more commercials. It's therefore a tall challenge to reach people with messages that can cut through the noise and produce the desired effect.

When I think of how overwhelming it can seem to get messages to those who need to hear them, I'm inspired by the memory of a picture I once saw. It showed a baby squirrel that someone rescued. The headline was to the effect of, "Does rescuing a baby squirrel make a difference in the world?" And the response was, "It does to that squirrel."

In the same spirit, sharing a powerful story about someone's gambling recovery may resonate with only a few, but for those few it can produce a tremendous sense of hope and plant the belief that important life changes are possible. It's for those people that we continue our efforts.

Northstar does its best to use funding in a way that gets information to people in need. One example is our fall campaign that focuses attention on older adults and the ways in which they're vulnerable to problem gambling. Our campaign uses a variety of mediums, including newsletters, newspaper and radio ads, social media messages and personal presentations to senior apartment complexes, to reach this audience. Next year, we will adopt a similarly customized approach to target other groups at high-risk for problem gambling, including military veterans and those incarcerated or just re-entering society.

Creating general awareness is always a main goal of our efforts. But to the individual person or family helped by our efforts, it makes a world of difference.

Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to help those affected by problem gambling in Minnesota. We do this by promoting awareness and understanding of the issue via our website, newsletter, community education programs, sponsorship of the Minnesota State Conference on Problem Gambling, and training of professionals in preventing and treating problem gambling.

Northern Light is funded by a grant from the state of Minnesota. Designer: ESD Graphics. Writer: Bill Stein

PROVIDER

Profile

Progressive Individual Resources, Inc.

Richard Oni, Ph.D, PIR executive director



Raising awareness about the issue of problem gambling and getting treatment to those in need is a significant challenge. However, it's particularly difficult when trying to reach immigrant communities whose cultures and circumstances are different than those for most other Minnesotans.

In an effort to develop culturally specific services for gambling treatment, the Minnesota Department of Human Services established a pilot project three years ago with Progressive Individual Resources (PIR). PIR is a social service agency that provides services to adults, children and families from diverse backgrounds, and specializes in working with new African immigrant refugees to promote healthy social adjustment.

"We have many unique challenges in getting members of these communities to seek treatment," says Richard Oni, Ph.D, PIR executive director. Those barriers include both practical and psychological issues.

"First, this is a population that lacks resources," says Fardowsa Mohamed, clinical service coordinator. "They are not mobile and do not drive, so transportation is a big obstacle."

Beyond the issues of physically getting to an appointment, there are other issues unique to the community. The stigma associated with having a gambling problem—and mental health issues

such as addiction in general—is bigger than in other communities. And because the communities are small and so many people know each other, there are privacy concerns, even when practitioners emphasize confidentiality of services.

There can also be confusion about the exact definition of gambling. "The first thing that comes to mind is casinos, but non-western gambling can be defined in so many ways," says Fardowsa. "We allow clients to identify what gambling might be and to determine what other things they might be doing that constitute gambling."

A variety of strategies can help create awareness about problem gambling to immigrant communities. One of the most important is building trust in the community. "While they are all Africans, they come from different places," says Billy Banjoko, addiction therapist. "Even the greeting is different with each culture. Learning about the individual culture is important in making potential clients comfortable with the process."

Another approach is to avoid shaming. "We try to talk about it as an illness and ask how we can assist them and ask how help is offered in their country," says Fardowsa.

Other avenues of outreach include making appearances at well-attended cultural events and establishing connections with community leaders, including mosques and other places of faith. "One of the keys

to our efforts is repetition, so the more we can communicate the message, the more likely it is to make sense to people in the community," says Chuck Egbujor, clinical supervisor.

A variety of strategies can help create awareness about problem gambling to immigrant communities. One of the most important is building trust in the community.

A unique strength offered by PIR is its multi-cultural staff, which means there's a good chance that a client can be matched with a counselor from the same background and culture. PIR is also unique in the way it provides "wraparound" services, which emphasize a more holistic view of addiction and mental health and support a client in all life aspects.

Still, the process of educating immigrant communities about gambling addiction can be slow. "The system just doesn't understand that with these groups it requires patience and humility, and to accept that not everything is well understood," says Dr. Oni. "But what's important is that when these people need the service, it will be there for them."

DON FEENEY RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FROM NCPG



Don Feeny, former research and planning director at the Minnesota State Lottery and a board member of Northstar and the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), received the prestigious Monsignor Joseph Dunne Lifetime Award for Advocacy at the NCPG's annual conference in Portland, Oregon last month. The award is given in recognition of career dedication to improving the lives of problem gamblers and their families through advocacy, research, training or public awareness. *Northern Light* asked Don to reflect back on his career.

NL: You have been involved in problem gambling for many years. How did you get started?

DF: In 1993, George Andersen, who was director of the Minnesota Lottery, called me into his office and told me that he believed problem gambling was going to be a big issue for the lottery industry. At the time, most lottery directors were either denying that the problem existed or were denying that lotteries had anything to do with it. George knew better, and he told me that he wanted me to become the industry expert, to read what I needed to read, go to the meetings I needed to go to, and meet the people I needed to meet. I am forever grateful to George for that assignment.

Working with Lance Holthusen and Roger Svendsen to start the Northstar Alliance was a big thing. Again, that was George's idea. He knew Minnesota needed a credible

voice to advocate on the issue or it would be left to those who wanted to use the problem gambler to further their own interests on one side or the other.

NL: In addition to being on the board of the National Council on Problem Gambling you also served as the organization's president. What was that experience like?

DF: First, it was an incredible honor. I was the first (and so far only) person connected with the gambling industry to be elected to that position, and it was quite controversial at the time—I wasn't elected until the third ballot. I worked hard to put those fears to rest and was re-elected unanimously. But it was also a time when because of the Great Recession a number of the Council's major donors had to cut back on their contributions. I'm really proud that between great work by the board and the staff we were able to get through that period without major cutbacks in staff or programming. I learned a lot about management and about the entirety of the problem gambling field beyond my areas of research and public policy.

NL: What do you feel are the biggest obstacles facing those who work in the area of problem gambling, whether in prevention, treatment, research or advocacy?

DF: First, the lack of funding nationwide, particularly at the federal level. Research isn't something that can be adequately done at the state level, nor should it be primarily

financed by industry. But Congress and the federal bureaucracy has taken the position that the federal government should have nothing to do with gambling, despite the immense sum of money coming to the federal government from taxes on the gambling industry. Second, there is still a lack of communication between researchers, policy makers and treatment professionals. We've learned a tremendous amount in the last several years, but it's been very slow to trickle down to those who actually treat problem gamblers.

NL: Are there any key trends happening now that you think will impact the field for the next 5-10 years?

DF: The biggest new trend is the emergence of new forms of gambling that don't meet the strict legal definition of gambling and are therefore operating without regulation. These include social games, fantasy sports, e-sports and other games that either include an element of skill or have non-traditional costs of entry or rewards. We know these games are potentially addictive, and that the addiction looks like, walks like, and quacks like a gambling addiction, but if someone doesn't think that what they do is gambling, will they seek help from a gambling counselor, or, for that matter, from anyone? A related issue is that our treatment, prevention and recovery programs were designed either by or for baby boomers, but millennials and generation Z gamble in different ways, communicate in different ways, grew up

with a different set of cultural expectations, and expect to receive services in different ways.

NL: Your peers in the world of problem gambling recognized you this summer when you received the National Council's highest honor, the Monsignor Joseph Dunne Lifetime Award for Advocacy. Can you tell us a little about that award's history and how it felt to be chosen for such a high honor?

DF: I'm not the expert on the award's history, except to say that Monsignor Dunne was the founder of the National Council. He was a New York City police chaplain who saw gambling addiction on the police force and was able to get officers into Gambler's Anonymous. He realized that gamblers needed an advocacy organization and so started the National Council in 1972. I never had the opportunity to meet the Monsignor, but am truly honored to receive an award named after him. I learned I was receiving the award about a week before the annual conference, and from then through the awards ceremony and beyond I was walking on air. It's something that I just never envisioned happening.

By the way, I'm the second Minnesotan to receive the award. Roger Svendsen won it in 1999. And Sandy Brustuen won the Custer Lifetime Award for Direct Service in 2012.

NL: You have retired from your position with the Minnesota Lottery. Will you continue to be involved in the problem gambling field in some capacity in the coming years?

DF: Yes, I hope so. Since retiring, I've been elected president of the Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance and have represented the National Council at the recent North American lottery conference.

NL: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

DF: The best part of my involvement has been getting to know some really amazing people. I had the opportunity to be mentored by some of the founders of the problem gambling field who never looked down on me as someone "from the industry." In particular, several folks from Minnesota—Roger Svendsen, Randy Stinchfield and Ken Winters—were kind enough to take me under their wings and introduce me to some of the leading lights worldwide. I am truly in their debt.

MINNESOTA GAINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR EFFORTS TO COMBAT PROBLEM GAMBLING

The Minnesota Department of Human Services earned two national awards for its efforts to combat problem gambling at the 31st annual conference of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) in July. NCPG recognized Minnesota's programs to reach unique audiences through its "Just Ask MN" campaign and Lao community engagement initiative.

Minnesota DHS's Lao community engagement initiative earned the Corporate Multi-Cultural Communications Award for being the "most effective multi-cultural outreach program using integrated communication channels." The initiative engaged the Twin Cities Southeast Asian community in a multi-year listening process. The goal of the effort was to collaborate with the Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota to develop awareness and culturally appropriate resources to address problem gambling. The Lao creative is featured on the Communities page of GetGamblingHelp.com.

JustAskMN.org won the Corporate Website Award for being an "outstanding website that has best raised public awareness of problem/pathological gambling." JustAskMn.org aims to raise awareness and prevent problem gambling among young adults. Research shows that young adults—specifically, college-age individuals—tend to be at a higher risk for problem gambling than adults and an estimated six percent of college students in the U.S. have a serious gambling problem. JustAskMn.org encourages young adults to explore their concerns about gambling, know the signs and risks associated with problem gambling, and make use of many available resources. The digital-focused campaign was developed with the insights of focus groups and in-person interviews.

REFLECTIONS ON DON FEENEY

"Don has been a tireless and passionate proponent for problem gambling awareness for as long as I have known him. He was instrumental in securing early and continued funding for the state's compulsive gambling programs. Without Don's involvement, neither the state of Minnesota nor the National Council on Problem Gambling would have the effective programs that exist today."**"**

– Mary Magnuson, Northstar board member

"Don was a very strong and helpful supporter for all the efforts that we initiated in providing assistance for people in trouble with their gambling and also for problem gambling prevention."**"**

– Roger Svendsen, Northstar co-founder

"I have known Don for 26 years as a colleague in the field of gambling and problem gambling. While working in the "business" of promoting and marketing the sale of lottery tickets, Don balanced his vocation with a concern for people with gambling disorder and their families, advocating for "treatment on demand" and working to ensure that treatment cost was not a barrier to treatment. Don has also been instrumental in obtaining state money to fund research into the etiology, prevalence measurement and treatment outcome of gambling disorder in Minnesota."**"**

– Randy Stinchfield, retired clinical psychologist, University of Minnesota Medical School, and Northstar board member

"Don has been the key person I have reached out to for assistance in any number of areas. I've been impressed with his vast knowledge and experience around problem gambling, and even more so with his sincere commitment to help those struggling with gambling disorders."**"**

– Cathie Perrault, Northstar executive director

JACK'S *Story*

While I never know what's in store for each day, I feel good about my recovery now. I don't have urges to gamble but I have to make sure I don't entertain thoughts about gambling.



Over the years that I've been in GA, I've seen the addiction literally kill several people—by driving them to commit suicide. That easily could have included me.

If there's one thing I've learned about addiction, it's that it's progressive.

I've learned that the hard way, having gone to treatment for compulsive gambling and chemical dependency about a half dozen times.

Although I've been a compulsive gambler for approximately 25 years, I've only actually gambled for about five of those years. Each time I've relapsed, the “crash and burn” has come more quickly. Every time I've thought I could safely place a bet, it's been the addiction talking to me, playing tricks on me. It's a lie.

And when I say progressive, I really do mean progressive. Gambling destroyed my integrity and value system in ways I never imagined. I ended up crossing lines

I never thought I'd cross. Before becoming a compulsive gambler, I didn't lie or steal. But I found myself feeling increasingly desperate and would do anything to get that big win. With each crash and burn, it gets worse and worse.

Over the years that I've been in GA, I've seen the addiction literally kill several people—by driving them to commit suicide. That easily could have included me. In my desperate moments, I had suicidal thoughts, like so many other compulsive gamblers.

My own addiction started after my first big win, a feeling I've really been chasing ever since. I was in a bar in Sioux Falls and placed a \$20 bet on video poker. I won \$750.

I remember the feeling being similar to the high I got with alcohol. I'm also a recovering alcoholic, though I've found an addiction to drinking easier to overcome than compulsive gambling.

I work hard to stay on top of things. I know that relapses happen when I get complacent.

My first taste of recovery occurred when I went to Vanguard (Vanguard Center for Gambling Recovery in Granite Falls, Minnesota) for compulsive gambling treatment in 1992, one year after it opened. I ended up working there as a tech and later as a peer counselor. I was clean for about three years.

When I left, they suggested I not drink and go to AA meetings so I wouldn't wind up going out and gambling again. But that's exactly what happened. I ended up going back into business where I worked in sales and travelled frequently. I started drinking again and then got back into gambling.

I have gambled several times since then, and the last time I gambled was about a year ago. While I never know what's in store for each day, I feel good about my recovery now. I don't have urges to gamble but I have to make sure I don't entertain thoughts about gambling.

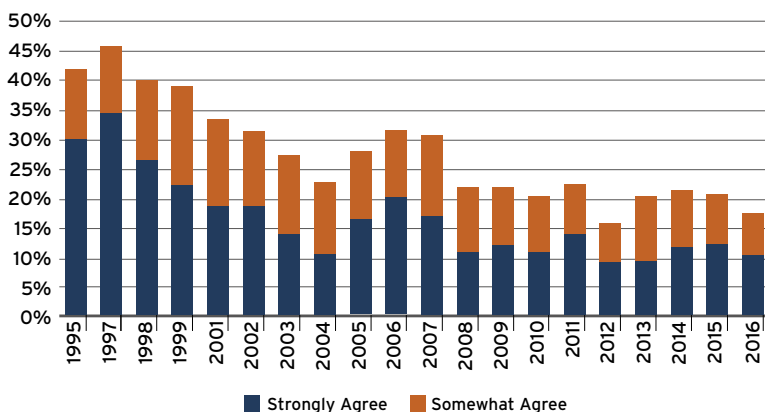
I work hard to stay on top of things. I know that relapses happen when I get complacent. I attend three GA meetings per week and meet regularly with a therapist, who helps me to learn to focus on positive changes in my life. I've explored various new avenues and activities—things I've never done before—like yoga.

It's also important for me to be with other compulsive gamblers and to help them, as that helps me as well. I remind them that I, like them, had the mentality that I could control my gambling and that it's not an addiction. They need to realize it will never get any better and that it will always get worse if they gamble in any way. There is no dabbling with gambling. The quicker it's nipped, the better off they'll be. Like I say, it's progressive.

GAMBLING AMONG TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S SENIORS *continued from page 1*

"All gambling in Minnesota should be outlawed"

Minnesota Seniors, Age 65+



Source: St. Cloud University

Gambling Rates Are Higher Among Tomorrow's Seniors.

Gambling participation rates are higher in the next generation of seniors. Nearly all (97 percent) in this age group reported gambling at some point in their life, with 81 percent saying they gambled in the last year. While all types of gambling were more popular among this group, the most significant increases occurred in sports gambling.

Nearly One Million Future Seniors Gamble. The number of people born between 1946 and 1964 who reported gambling in the last year was nearly one

million. To the extent that persons in this group are at risk as they grow old (risk factors include increased isolation, occurrence of significant life events, amount of free time and living on a fixed income), this represents a segment of the population that needs to be monitored closely for developing gambling problems.

If you'd like to view Todd's full Powerpoint presentation, visit NorthstarProblemGambling.org and click on Conference under the For Professionals menu.



Share a Recovery Story

Stories of recovery from compulsive gambling provide hope to those currently struggling with the addiction and their families. If you or someone you know would like to share your story, please contact Linda at linda@NorthstarProblemGambling.org or (651) 424-8595. Your identity will not be disclosed.



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**Save The Date: March 8-9,
Minnesota Conference On
Problem Gambling**

What: Minnesota Conference on
Problem Gambling

When: March 8-9, 2018

Where: Earle Brown Heritage Center,
Brooklyn Center

For More Information: Follow
NorthstarProblemGambling.org



scan to visit
www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org

NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE
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Changing Problem Gambling Behavior through:
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • RESEARCH • ADVOCACY

