



Prevention and Early Intervention

Problem Gambling's Learning Edge

Chris Freethy

BBSoc (Hons) Grad Dip Bus Mgt M Mgt MAPS

GAMBLER'S **HELP**™ 1800 156 789

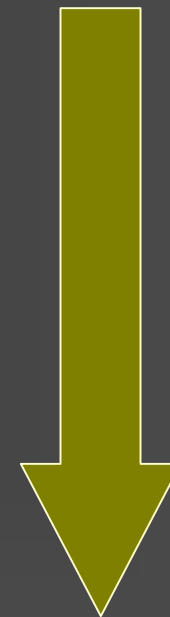
SOUTHERN

Introduction

- In a number of jurisdictions, problem gambling treatment services are well established, and attention is turning to how to prevent and minimise gambling related harm
- The terms prevention and early intervention are used with increasing frequency, but are problematic since underlying frameworks vary and the focus is often narrow
- There is a range of stakeholder positions on the issue, complicating the development of appropriate regimes
- There is a growing need to develop a comprehensive, coherent and consistent approach to the issue

A Conceptual Map

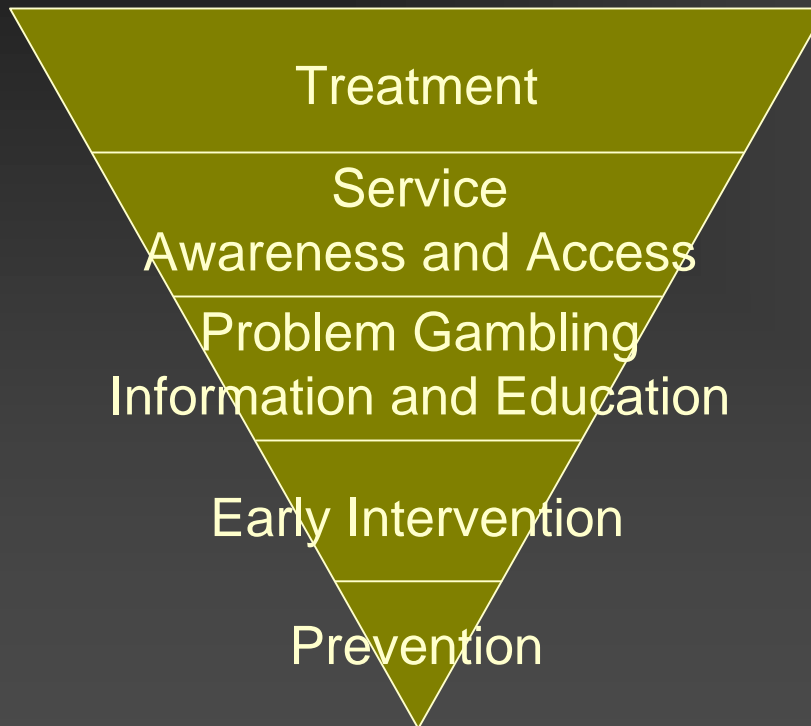
Resource Needs and Scope of Interventions



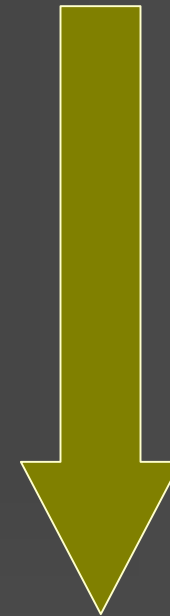
GAMBLER'S HELP 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Current Best Practice



Resource Provision and Intervention Priorities in Better Jurisdictions

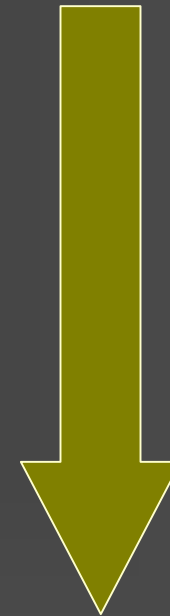
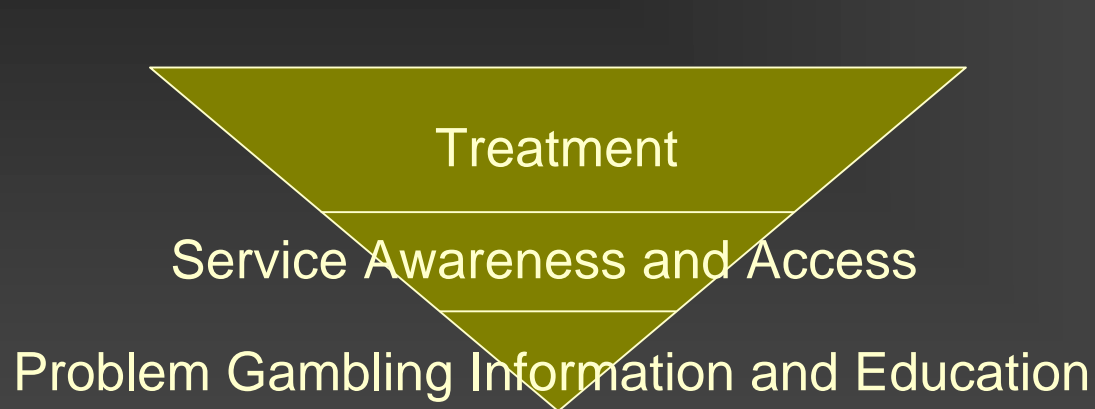


GAMBLER'S HELP 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Typical Practice

Resource Provision and
Intervention Priorities in
Most Jurisdictions



GAMBLER'S HELP 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Early Intervention Working Group

- Victorian government Problem Gambling Round Table Early Intervention Working Group provides a lens for viewing the issues
- Revealed substantial differences in knowledge and position, lack of a framework and agreed definitions
- Participants' mental models of gambling determined perceptions of the issue and appropriate interventions
Aiming to focus on at risk groups, the first meeting focused instead on service access for people with problems
- Developing a briefing paper highlighted the challenges
- A literature and Internet search revealed thinking was oriented toward education and information
- Awareness of gaps was reflected in some documents

GAMBLER'S **HELP** 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

A Starting Point

Distilling the results of the literature review:

- Early intervention initiatives seek to promote health and well being and prevent the development of problems in groups identified as 'at risk'
- Early intervention is in a continuum with prevention and treatment
- Early intervention occurs at many levels
- Early intervention is both direct and indirect
- Prevention focuses more on broad information and education approaches, alternative activities, community development and public policy at a stage preceding early intervention. It is less targeted

Scope And Definition Issues

- Mental models of problem gambling are critical
- Clinical models imply :
 - strict boundaries
 - prevention might be irrelevant because of driving pathology
 - all problem gamblers are like those in treatment, and will respond to a treatment based approach
 - the foci of prevention and early intervention are problem awareness, service access and effective treatment programs
- Continuum models encompass a broad group, displaying a range of behaviours and degrees of severity. This is a more inclusive group than would ever attend treatment
- The focus is more broadly systemic
- These differing conceptions of the problem and therefore the solutions create boundary tensions around the issue

A Framework for Action

- Overarching proposition: gambling as a public health/population health issue
- A framework for action developed from a set of principles:
 - Strengthening communities
 - Targeted interventions
 - Community self management
 - Breaking down the barriers
 - Therapeutic alliances

GAMBLER'S **HELP**™ 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Strengthening Communities

- Client presentations suggest a range of overarching societal issues that increase vulnerability to gambling problems: social isolation, boredom, relationship and family problems, poverty and structural inequality, access to alternative leisure and recreation activities, and so on
- Initiatives are required that foster social connection and cohesion, supportive communities and broader social structures that assist people to participate in society in ways that address these issues
- By strengthening communities and social structures, the development of gambling problems may be prevented

Targeted Interventions

- The next layer of action is interventions for at risk groups. This sits at the prevention – early intervention boundary
- E.G., community development strategies to identify and strengthen vulnerable communities: CALD; isolated older adults; people with mental health issues, young people etc
- Gambler's Help Southern has pursued a range of targeted approaches, where possible completing local research to better inform interventions. Recent initiatives include:
 - Alternative recreation needs of service clients
 - Service needs of mental health clients and sex workers
 - “Exercising A Wiser Choice” program

Recreation Needs

- This project investigated the recreation needs of problem gamblers. It identified service gaps and barriers, providing leisure use recommendations for clients
- Client knowledge of leisure activities was higher than expected. The key issue was failure to participate
- A range of barriers to participation were identified
- The project reinforced consultation, education and advocacy roles, to reduce barriers
- Gaps included unstructured activities, gathering spaces, supporting people to access leisure, participation in leisure planning and advocacy for inclusive leisure options
- A recreation database with website links was devised

Vulnerable Groups

- Examined gambling-related harm amongst sex workers and people with mental health problems, service barriers, harm minimisation strategies, “risk” and “protective” factors
- Gaming machines were the major issue, allied with the attractiveness of gaming venues for these groups.
- Problem gambling risk factors were generic life issues
- Exacerbated by service system and legislative issues
- Protective factors for problem gambling were: support networks, income, housing, service systems, life plans
- Service barriers were predictable (stigma, knowledge, motivation...) but included service system variables as well
- Main recommendation was continued collaborative service provider approaches

GAMBLER'S **HELP** 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Exercising – A Wiser Choice

- Arose from recreation use issues in the client group
- Tied in with age and gender issues
- Matched well with City of Kingston (local government) initiatives
- Funded by government to provide a program of exercise, health and personal development activities aimed at preventing problem gambling
- Only one example of this form of intervention, but demonstrates the approach and the potential for collaborative approaches to prevention and early intervention

Community Self Management

- Moving along the intervention scale, education and information are staple problem gambling interventions
- Considerable expertise in mass marketing and communication campaigns is accruing
- Challenges reside in developing innovative approaches that effectively target population segments and assist self management
- Examples include the young persons' website in Canada, Strategies for Change multilingual self help handbooks, cartoons or audio visual materials for low literacy groups
- The setting for delivering information and education also requires attention

Settings Approaches

- An example of settings based approaches to education was the Gambler's Help Southern Workplaces Project
- Workplaces are prime vehicles for educating large audiences. However, penetration of this sector is limited
- The project identified major barriers to implementing problem gambling programs in workplaces
- Outcomes must be sold in terms of business benefits
- A partnership approach to broad based health promotion
- Piloting a module based approach, using organisations as champions and networking with businesses
- Who is responsible for developing and resourcing a healthy work places approach?

Informed Consent

- Practice wisdom indicates substantial erroneous beliefs with respect to gambling play amongst clients
- Can we generalise this to the broader community? Work of Mark Dickerson, Robert Ladouceur et al suggests we can
- Anecdotal evidence from Early Intervention Working Group re player skill and knowledge corroborates the problem
- The government legislated increased player information and placed an EGM information booklet in a daily tabloid. There are many other examples of player information
- These are commendable but provide information only and do not create the conditions for informed consent
- Education is required as well as information

Informed Consent

- Gambler's Help Southern's Inside Pokies, a guide to EGM's delivered as a community education session. Early presentations to a range of audiences were well received
- Informed consent may include teaching people how to play correctly –controversial but desirable for harm minimisation
- If people choose to gamble, they cannot form informed consent if they don't know how to play
- Inclusion of how to play information in Inside Pokies sessions generated debate amongst participants
- Suggestions to the Casino that they teach patrons how to play effectively were received with caution
- Government is risk averse, and so far has not funded Inside Pokies. However, it may do so in future

In Venue Prevention and Early Intervention

- Is there a role for in situ intervention?
- Gambling venues are the one place we are guaranteed to find one of our main targets
- The logical place to intervene with gamblers is immediately prior to, and whilst engaged in, gambling. At this point, gamblers are in the context where the salient cognitions and emotions are easily accessible
- Reinforced by the work of Mark Dickerson, Tony Schellinck, Tracey Schrans and others that suggests players cycle in and out of problem and non problem play
- Efforts to date have been limited, and as noted previously, focused largely on information provision
- Six guiding principles for effective harm minimisation interventions

In Venue Intervention

- 1. Informed Consent:** Consumers and potential consumers of gambling products will be provided with sufficient education to be able to form informed consent to play
- 2. Player Control:** Within legislative parameters, all users of gambling products will be provided with the opportunity to control gambling variables in ways that facilitate a harm minimisation approach to gambling
- 3. Enabling Gambling Environments:** Gambling operators and providers will collaboratively design gambling environments that facilitate the responsible delivery of gambling products and reinforce informed consent principles

GAMBLER'S **HELP** 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

In Venue Intervention

- 4. Effectively Targeted Incentives:** Programs and promotions will target the development of responsible gambling behaviour amongst patrons
- 5. Cultural Congruence:** Each gambling industry stakeholder will develop a culture that embraces responsible gambling as core business and a fundamental pillar of corporate social responsibility
- 6. Training for Excellence:** Training will equip gambling venue staff and management to effectively develop and deliver responsible gambling

GAMBLER'S **HELP** 1800 156 789

SOUTHERN

Conclusions

- Only a snapshot; the reality is more complex again
- Clear definition of terms and a framework for action
- Ecological approach, cognisant of systemic issues
- A set of driving principles
- Comprehensive strategies based on a planned approach
- Multiple stakeholders
- Across jurisdictions and outside of the immediate players