Gambling and the Canadian Criminal Justice System

*Chris Myers CPGC*

*Addiction & Mental Health Services- KFLA*

*Ontario, Canada*
AGENDA

♦ Development and Implementation of Gambling Program for Incarcerated Problem Gamblers

♦ Unique Challenges providing programs for this population

♦ Overview of Crime and the relationship to Gambling

♦ Treating the Problem gambling Offender
Kingston, Ontario

Kingston has 8 Federal Institutions that house male offenders. These individuals are serving 2 years +. Dependant on a number of variables the offender is assigned to an Institution that meets their risk level. ie Maximum, Medium, Minimum levels of security.
How We Began

- The Agency received a call from a Programs Officer working out of Frontenac Institution.
- They had an Offender who was back inside on a parole violation.
- He had picked up new charges for money generating crimes. (fraud)
- This was his 3rd Federal bit for related offences

- We consulted with the Institution and the Program evolved.
Gambling program inside and out

- Initial assessment at FI and treatment plan developed and follow up appointments.
- When eligible Offenders applied for ETA’s and UTA’s to be able to attend office.(CA completed)
Gambling Training: Staff

Developed and implemented training for CSC Staff – in attendance where:

The Warden’s, Parole Officers, Programs Officers. Psychology

With most attention towards the Parole Officers ie case reviews, asking the question
Gambling Training: Clients

- Set up a number of information sessions
- Posters on ranges, common areas school
- Tele-don
Challenges delivering program

- Buy in from Correctional Staff and Inmates
- Restricted movement in the jail
- Lock downs
- Weekend routines during the week
- Class rooms being double booked
- Social program
- Lack of awareness of criminal behavior related to gambling
- Passes not going out
Difficulties in Identifying Criminal behaviours are related to gambling.

- Not everyone charged with a gambling-related crime will admit that it was due to gambling.
- There may be limited evidence that charges are gambling related.
- Official records seldom specify a gambling connection. ie court documents, police reports, Correctional plans etc.
Crime and Gambling

- Gambling crime can be divided into four categories:
  - Illegal Gambling
  - Crimes committed to support a gambling habit
  - Crimes that occur around gambling locations
  - And Family abuse. Predominately monetary vs violent crimes
Types of crime include theft, robbery, forgery, embezzlement, fraud, credit card scams, domestic violence, assault, child neglect, prostitution, loan sharking, money laundering, breaking and entering, home invasion and drug dealing.

In most desperate phase of compulsive gambling, they may do anything to gamble.
Contributing Factors of Crimes Committed by Problem Gamblers

- Increasingly large losses
- Exhausted resources to money
- Threats
- Opportunity
- Gambling will eventually resolve financial problems
Prison Culture and Gambling

- A high percentage of problem gamblers engage in illegal activities (2/3rds)
- A high percentage of problem gamblers go unidentified
- Gambling is a common feature of the prison culture
Gambling On A Continuum

- No Gambling
- Casual Social
- Serious Social
- Harmful Involvement
- Pathological Gambling

- Depending on the severity of gambling we would match the intensity of treatment.
Gambling in Correctional Facilities

- Card Playing
- Sports Betting
- Games of Skill
Offenders Wagers

- Money
- Canteen
- Tobacco
- Drugs
- Sexual Favours
Similarities Between Offenders and Non-offenders

- Both struggle with issues around causes of gambling
- Family Members have been affected by problem gamblers behaviour
- Both Share emotional difficulties
  - Poor self worth
  - Coping strategies
  - Struggles with guilt and shame
Statistics of Criminal Acts Associated with Gambling

- 45% of Pathological gamblers had committed crime solely for the purpose to financing their gambling.
- The prevalence rates for adults who report committing a crime for gambling funds is 65% and higher.
- Incarcerated adults 97% of Pathological gamblers reported committing an illegal act to finance gambling.
Therefore Treatment of offenders prior to release is essential!

- Currently running Treatment program at Frontenac Institution, Pittsburgh Institution, and Collins Bay Institution.

- Treatment Program consists of 8 weeks 2x weekly or 15 weeks 1x weekly.

- Currently going to pilot a 5 session psycho-educational evening group at FI.

- Referral to In house Treatment Windsor PGS.

- Referral to home city for follow up.
Comments made by offenders

Confidentiality contract – very important

Only person who took the time to explain things.

I have a feeling of hope.

OQ 31- shows improvement

Favorable Outcomes pre/post testing
HELPFUL SCREENING TOOLS

- Problem Gambling Severity Index
- South Oaks Gambling Screen
- CAMH Short Screen
- GA 20 Questionnaire
- DSM-IV Criteria: Pathological Gambling
Other useful treatment tools

- Inventory of Gambling Situations (IGS)
- Self Monitoring of gambling or urges to gamble
- Self-Help Workbook – How to quit or reduce your gambling.
- Off Site Self exclusion program
- All information can be found on CAMH’s Website. Problemgambling.ca
- Referrals to Residential PG Treatment.
Any Questions?

Thank You!

Chris Myers, CPGC
Problem Gambling Counsellor/Educator
Addiction & Mental Health Services KFLA