

**THE NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**REPORT TO THE GENERAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
OF THE NEBRASKA UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE**

**APRIL 27, 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

The Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling directs the operation of the Gamblers Assistance Program. This annual report summarizes the finances of the program and describes the Commission's activities. The program's staff does the following:

- Contracts with counselors who provide counseling and treatment services for problem gamblers and their families who are residents of Nebraska;
- Develops a process for evaluation and approval of contracts with treatment providers and other services vendors;
- Develops standards for training and certification of counselors;
- Gathers, reviews and uses evaluation data on which to base program initiatives;
- Informs the public about problem gambling and prevention of problem gambling;
- Creates and implements outreach and education programs;
- Develops and implements methods to assess outcomes of program activities;
- Investigates and implements evidence-based best practices in the field of gambling addiction education, prevention and treatment.

The Gamblers Assistance Program operates in a culture that increasingly accepts various forms of gambling as entertainment. The Program and the counselors who work in the program deal with the problems that result when entertainment turns into an addiction. According to reliable estimates, approximately 14,000 adult Nebraskans are addicted, and another 210,000 are gambling in ways that indicate they are at risk to develop addiction.

The prevailing attitudes about gambling are demonstrated by the public's participation in these activities. In the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2018, government-sponsored gambling in Nebraska collected approximately \$471.5 million in wagers, divided among various forms of charitable gaming and the state lotteries. There is little doubt that significantly more money is wagered in tribal casinos located in Nebraska, numerous casinos in surrounding states, and illegal forms of gambling emerging nationwide to which Nebraskans have easy access.

Public attitudes about gambling influence public policy. Governments at all levels in Nebraska depend on wagering to fund programs. Last year, local governments and non-government entities derived \$27 million in profits from charitable gaming, and state government collected \$50 million from the combination of state charitable gaming tax and the operation of state lotteries.

## I. GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FINANCES

The Gamblers Assistance Program receives funding from two cash funds: the Gamblers Assistance Fund and the Health Care Cash Fund. Revenue into the Gamblers Assistance Fund comes from the state lottery and the state-level charitable gaming tax. *The Program does not receive a general fund appropriation.* The financial outlines that follow give a breakdown of the program's revenues and expenditures.

### GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE FUND PERFORMANCE: 03/01/2019-02/29/2020

#### REVENUE

1. Constitution, Article III, Section 24, formula: \$500,000 + 1% of remaining lottery profit	
Transfer, March 2019	117,553
Transfer, June 2019	108,331
Transfer, September 2019 (\$500,000 + 1%)	590,384
Transfer, December 2019	<u>96,573</u>
TOTAL	912,841
2. Statute section 9-831: 5% of Lottery advertising expenditures	329,418
3. Statute section 9-1,101: from Charitable Gaming Operations Fund	200,000
4. Investment income	14,381
5. Event registration fees	<u>861</u>
TOTAL REVENUE TO GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE FUND	1,457,501

#### EXPENDITURES

Salaries and benefits	143,827
Problem Gambling Messages	411,718
Other operations	68,516
Government aid	<u>936,899</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES OUT OF GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE FUND	1,560,960

**RECAP**

Gamblers Assistance Fund revenues	1,457,501
Gamblers Assistance Fund expenditures	<u>-1,560,960</u>
Gamblers Assistance Fund expenditures in excess of revenue	(103,459)

**GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE FUND CASH POSITION**

Gamblers Assistance Fund cash balance 03/01/2019	733,391
Gamblers Assistance Fund cash balance 02/29/2020	<u>629,932</u>
Gamblers Assistance Fund cash balance reduction 03/01/19-02/29/20	(103,459)

**HEALTH CARE CASH FUND**

Appropriation	250,000
Expenditure: Government Aid Programs	<u>-250,000</u>
Net	0

**GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TOTAL**

**REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES 03/01/2019-02/29/2020**

Total program revenue from two cash funds	1,707,501
Salaries and benefits	- 143,827
Problem Gambling Messages	- 411,718
Other operations	- 68,516
Government aid	<u>- 1,186,899</u>
Net program expenditures in excess of revenue	(103,459)

## II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD

**MARCH 1, 2018-FEBRUARY 28, 2019**

### 1. Commission Meetings

The Commission met four times during the period to consider issues regarding the operations of the program. These meetings included reviews of the financial status of the program; new contracts with counselors and other vendors; development of budget requests; and consideration of proposals for expansion, education and outreach. Meeting notices and agendas were posted on the state events calendar, the program website and the website of the Charitable Gaming Division of the Department of Revenue. Minutes of meetings were posted on the program website and the website of the Charitable Gaming Division.

### 2. Counselor Contracts

The Commission has made contracts with twenty one agencies and individual counselors who have been trained and certified to assist Nebraskans dealing with the consequences of gambling addiction. These contracts provide for a combination of counseling services and local and regional education and outreach by the counselors. At their current pace, counselors will deliver approximately 11,000 hours per year of counseling to Nebraskans diagnosed with a gambling disorder.

Through December, 2018, the Commission funded operation of a telephone helpline service provided through the Nebraska Council on Compulsive Gambling. Effective January 1, 2019, the Commission transferred this service to the Louisiana Association on Problem Gambling at a savings to the program of \$75,000 per year. This helpline, operated 24 hours per day every day of the year, received over 1,500 calls during the period covered by this report. Callers in significant crisis were immediately referred to qualified counselors.

### 3. New therapist training and certification

The Commission continued to provide tuition support to Nebraskans taking courses offered online by Bellevue University in their Certificate of Gambling Specialty program. This is a course developed by the Nebraska Council on Compulsive Gambling with underwriting from the Commission. Courses are offered in segments over a period of 19 weeks, for a total of 72 credit hours. Upon completion the candidate is eligible to received provisional certification to provide counseling therapy through the Nebraska program. The American Society of Addiction Medicine, in its publication *The ASAM Criteria* recommends that a therapist providing counseling in this field should have specialized training and certification due to the unique characteristics of

gambling addiction. This is the policy of the Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program. Since inception in the fall of 2014, 40 Nebraskans have completed this training.

#### 4. Public education and information

The Commission is required by statute to devote an allocation of 5% of the State Lottery advertising budget to the dissemination of problem gambling messages. As the budget allows, this is supplemented with other program funds. During the twelve months covered by this report, the Commission used these funds to launch a digital media campaign, support counselors as they distributed information in communities, and purchased a series of ads in statewide newspapers.

#### 5. Data gathering and analysis

The Commission continued its contract with a local statistician who accumulates and analyzes data that the counselors gather from their clients. The program's database includes demographic, financial, social, economic and gambling background information from persons diagnosed with gambling disorder and admitted into counseling. This data, some of which goes back at least 10 years, represents the best available evidence about problem gambling issues in our state.

### **III. PROGRAM DATA**

The graph attached to this report shows data gathered from Nebraskans by counselors covering the period from July 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. Among topics of concern to the Commission:

- 71% of Nebraskans addicted to gambling first gambled by age 20, and about 41% of them by age 15.
- The graphs illustrate the migration among types of gambling activity – these young gamblers started playing poker and sports, and then switched to keno, touch screen skill games and slot machines.
- Gambling debt is a significant issue in this population.
- 42% of these Nebraskans addicted to gambling have considered suicide, as their financial and other personal problems mounted.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling continues to perform its obligations to expand therapy services throughout the state and develop methods to inform the public about gambling disorder and the facts about gambling in Nebraska.

David Geier, Director

Gamblers Assistance Program

Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program

# Data Report - Summary

July 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018

## DATA REPORT

**Total Unique Individuals Receiving Counseling Help**

# 355

**New Admissions**

**Gamblers: 75**  
**Family members: 18**  
**Urgent Care: 113**

[One out of three urgent care visits have resulted in a new admission to long-term counseling]

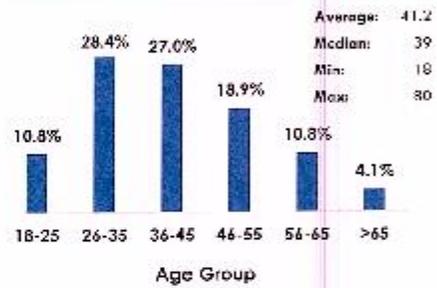
**Total Gambling Debt**

# \$977,245

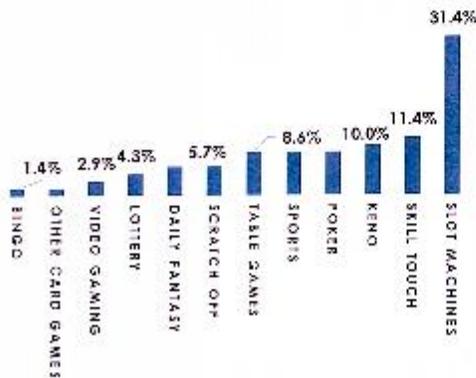
[\$13,030: average gambling debt per gambler]



**Age at Time of Admission**



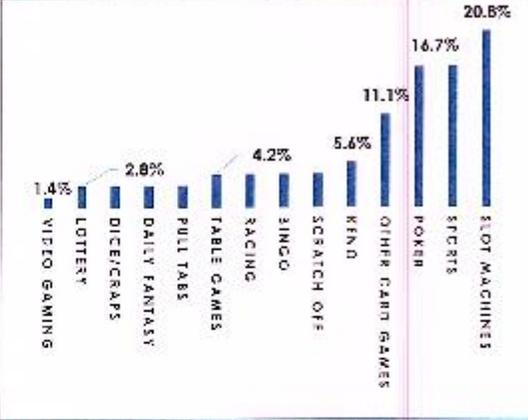
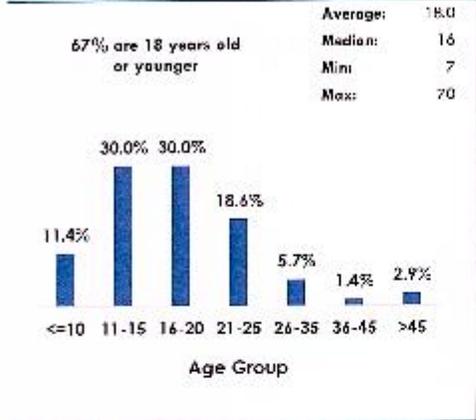
**Most Frequent Gambling Activity in last 12 Months**



**Access to Counseling Services**

**75%** of Nebraskans say it's "important" that gambling counseling services are paid for

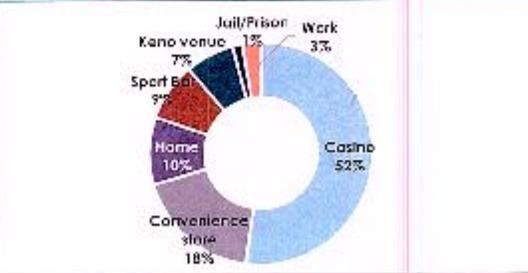
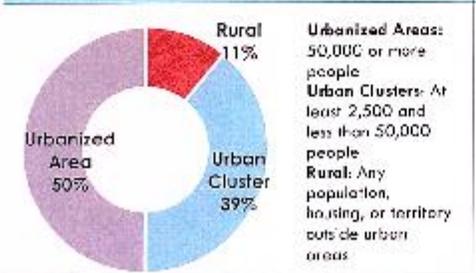
Age First Gambled	First Gambling Activity
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Percentage of Gambling Debt vs. Household Debt	Percentage of Gambling Debt vs. Annual Gross Income
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Location of Nebraskans Receiving Help	Gambling Location
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Considered ending life in the last 12 months	Attempted ending life in the last 12 months																						
<b>42%</b>	<b>9%</b>																						
Gender	Race/Ethnicity																						
<p>A donut chart showing the gender distribution of individuals. The chart is divided into three segments: MALE (69%), FEMALE (30%), and TRANS (1%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>MALE</td> <td>69%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FEMALE</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TRANS</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Gender	Percentage	MALE	69%	FEMALE	30%	TRANS	1%	<p>A donut chart showing the race/ethnicity distribution of individuals. The chart is divided into six segments: WHITE (88%), HISPANIC (8%), BLACK (3%), AMERICAN INDIAN (1%), ASIAN (1%), and MULTIRACIAL (1%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Race/Ethnicity</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WHITE</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HISPANIC</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BLACK</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AMERICAN INDIAN</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ASIAN</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MULTIRACIAL</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Race/Ethnicity	Percentage	WHITE	88%	HISPANIC	8%	BLACK	3%	AMERICAN INDIAN	1%	ASIAN	1%	MULTIRACIAL	1%
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Exposure to gambling when growing up	Exposure to other addictions (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) when growing up																						
<b>57%</b>	<b>93%</b>																						
Broken the law to support gambling	Person in counseling has threatened to harm spouse or intimate partner																						
<b>31%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>																						

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## Benefit of Service as Reported by Nebraskans

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### During Services:

- **93%** of Nebraskans report lower gambling when compared to start of counseling
- **74%** of Nebraskans report lower gambling debt since counseling started
- **60%** of Nebraskans report positive progress toward goal for gambling
- **92%** of family members feel satisfied with counseling
- **72%** of family members feel very motivated to continue with counseling

### At Discharge:

- **80%** of Nebraskans report being helped within six sessions
- **88%** of Nebraskans reduced their gambling
- **67%** of Nebraskans reduced their gambling debt