

NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 22, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m.

Roll Call: Present in person: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Absent excused: Lambert, Zohner and Monheiser.

Announcements:

Chairperson Lutz made the following announcements:

The notice of this regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling was posted publicly on August 8, 2025 on the State events calendar and on the website of the Gamblers Assistance Program. The notice of meeting with the agenda has been available continuously here in the office of the Gamblers Assistance Program in Whitehall Campus, building 7, 5800 Walker Avenue, Lincoln, Nebraska since the date when the notice was posted publicly.

This meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling is conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is on the table in this room.

Copies of other printed materials that may be considered by the Commission during the meeting are also available to the public on the table in this room.

Public comments on issues presented during this meeting will be allowed by the chair from time to time during the meeting and may also be requested by any member of the commission at any time.

The sequence of our discussion of agenda items and the timing of discussion are tentative and subject to ruling by the chair as this meeting goes on.

Let us now pause for a moment of reflection before we move on to the next item on the agenda.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings:

The Chair called for amendments or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of May 16, 2025. Hearing none, Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the minutes as distributed, seconded by Commissioner Moore. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Items 2 through 5: Reports by Director about program activities, pending legislation, financial reports by State Accounting, internal finance and data reports.

The Director presented a series of reports about program activities, program finances and data. The director's narrative report is attached to these minutes.

Agenda Item 6: Fiscal year 2025-26 Program Budget Controls

The Director presented an outline of the components of the Program budget and described the situation that may arise as this year goes on. The meeting materials included an outline of the budget, the issues and possible solutions. No vote was taken, as there was no proposal on the table. The topic was presented for discussion only with action reserved for a later meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Argus Communications Progress Report

Jessica MacDonald presented a summary of the results of the marketing campaign. Meeting materials included a report prepared by Argus that listed the results of the first round of ads in June and July, generating over 79,000 contacts to the Program website. Plans for this fall include banner ads at University of Nebraska football, basketball and volleyball; radio spots; and displays at Memorial stadium on game days. Renovation of the website will be completed this fall, including an interactive map that will allow visitors to locate the counseling service nearby.

Agenda Item 8: Approve Counselor contracts for FY25-26

Meeting materials included a list of contracts with counseling services for the current fiscal year. As required by Commission bylaws, a vote approving the contracts was necessary. Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the contracts, seconded by Commissioner Volnek. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 9: Approve Services contracts for FY25-26

Meeting materials included a list of other services contracts for the current fiscal year. As required by Commission bylaws, a vote approving the contracts was necessary. Commissioner Moore moved for approval of the contracts, seconded by Commissioner Leckband. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 10: Proposal to revise Urgent Care standard

Meeting materials included an outline of a possible revision of the Program standard for Urgent Care service. This item was for discussion only. Review and comments will be obtained from the Certification Advisory Board, and active counselors, before a complete proposal is presented at a later meeting.

Agenda Item 11: Issue new Provisional Counselor certificates

Meeting materials included applications for Provisional Certification by Rachel Knutson, Jason Hansen and Australia Hruby. All applications were complete and complied with Program standards, and approved by the Certification Advisory Board. Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the applications, seconded by Commissioner Moore. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 12: Upgrade certificates

Meeting materials included applications to upgrade counselors from provisional status to full certification by Jessica Segoviano, Debbie Buckley, Brenda Lembke and Danielle Bugay. The applications comply with Program standards and have been approved by the Certification Advisory Board. Commissioner Moore moved for approval of the applications, seconded by Commissioner Leckband. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Moore and Volnek. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

The Director's written narrative report including budget documents is attached to these minutes.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, November 14, 2025, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at a location in Lincoln to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

ATTEST:

Todd Zohner, Secretary

NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
AUGUST 22, 2025
DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TODAY'S AGENDA

This meeting will feature reports about ongoing activities and a look ahead to developments in Nebraska gaming and gambling.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Meeting materials include state accounting financial reports for last year and internal spreadsheets showing results of operations for the year. As usual, our largest spending category is counseling services. Last year counseling accounted for 73% of total spending. The average over four years since the pandemic quieted down has been 68.5% spent on counseling. This year will be no different. This year's budget is attached as a reminder. Projected spending on counseling is \$2,201,500 – 73.6% of the total.

Thirty counselors and agencies have signed contracts, and several more are pending. Today's agenda includes requests to approve three new counselor certificates and upgrade four provisional certificates. After today we will have 26 fully certified counselors plus 26 provisionally certified counselors active in Nebraska.

Today's agenda will focus on the financial health of the program and the issues we will face in the next few years. Expanding gambling and a growing work force of counselors will create challenges.

GAMBLING OUTLOOK

Casino expansion continues in Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, and just this week in Ogallala. Dakota City will probably be delayed for another year; Columbus appears to be finished. The other gaming situation is the "skill" games that generate a significant volume of counseling demand. Until now our program has not received any revenue from these games. Starting this year the promoters will pay a tax of 5% on their gross profit; our program is in line to receive 2.5% of this revenue. We do not have data on which to base a reliable projection of the amount of revenue this will produce.

LEGISLATION

Once again gambling topics will be on the agenda when the Legislature resumes in January. But before then there will be a hearing on an interim study requested by Senators Spivey and Hughes about the skill games. The hearing will be in October, with invited testimony only. The resolution calls for a thorough examination of social and financial aspects of this form of gaming.

A carryover bill would increase the gaming tax on skill games to 15%. The bill drew serious opposition at the public hearing last spring, and is now stuck in the revenue committee. The results of the interim study may motivate the committee to act on it.

BUDGET CONTROLS

Last summer Governor Pillen announced his desire to cut state spending by about 10%. Administration staff have been working on ways to do this. Even though the Governor does not have direct control of our program budget, we should respect the desire to limit spending the public's money by focusing on clear program goals within our means.

The discussion on today's agenda item 6 will be about this subject. This discussion needs to be the beginning of thoughtful planning for a future of tight budgets. Note that program spending has increased by 54% in just four years. Those years coincide with the introduction of casinos and the spread of skill gaming, but our revenue has not kept pace, increasing by only 36%. This meeting will introduce the topic that we must focus on as we get farther into this year.

OTHER NEWS

Jessica will report on progress with our marketing. Argus signed us up with University of Nebraska athletics so we will have a message presence at football, basketball and volleyball this year. This is on top of the renovated website and digital and social media messages campaign. The annual Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse gave us both an opportunity to learn more about addiction to gambling and addictions in general. I attended the national conference of the National Council on Problem Gambling in Columbus, Ohio. UNL Professor Jennifer Davidson reports that the high school gambling classes are being well received. Jessica and I are collaborating with the Nebraska Collegiate Prevention Alliance on ideas to address gambling, and specifically sports betting, on college campuses in Nebraska. Education about gambling is a high priority. Gambling is changing rapidly. We will continue to keep the Commission informed along the way.

David Geier
August 22, 2025

GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026
JULY 11, 2025

REVENUE

Share of State Lottery profits <i>500,000 + 1%; Constitution Article III Section 24</i>	900,000
5% of State Lottery ad budget <i>Statute Section 9-831</i>	300,000
Share of Charitable Gaming tax <i>Legislative fixed amount appropriation</i>	400,000
Share of Casino Wagering Tax <i>Racetrack Gaming Act Section 9-1204</i>	1,300,000
Share of MACD Gaming Tax	80,000
Investment Income <i>Gamblers Assistance Fund earnings</i>	<u>15,000</u>
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	<u>2,995,000</u>

EXPENDITURES

510000 PERSONAL SERVICES

511100 PERMANENT SALARIES <i>Limit set by Legislature</i>	149,532
515100 RETIREMENT PLANS EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.5%</i>	11,215
515200 FICA EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.65%</i>	11,439
515500 HEALTH INSURANCE EXPENSE <i>Employer share of premiums</i>	32,664
516500 WORKERS COMP PREMIUMS <i>State assessment</i>	<u>1,000</u>
Personal Services Total	205,850

520000 OPERATING EXPENSES

521100 POSTAGE EXPENSE	150
521400 CIO CHARGES <i>State data; communications</i>	17,000
521500 PUBLICATION & PRINT EXPENSE <i>State printing</i>	2,000
522200 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION <i>National Conference</i>	1,500
524600 RENT EXPENSE-BUILDINGS	8,225
531100 OFFICE SUPPLIES EXPENSE	750
534600 EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES <i>Texts, manuals</i>	1,000
541100 ACCTG & AUDITING SERVICES	6,000
541200 PURCHASING ASSESSMENT	400
554130 VIDEO SERVICES <i>Zoom Video</i>	7,250
554900 OTHER CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	
<i>Data analyst</i>	80,000
<i>Bellevue Univ. training & testing</i>	10,000
<i>Helpline service</i>	32,500
559100 OTHER OPERATING EXPENSE	
<i>NAADGS Membership</i>	3,500
<i>Midwest Conference sponsorship</i>	5,000
559164 PROBLEM GAMBLING MESSAGES <i>RFP Awarded Contract</i>	<u>400,000</u>
Operating Expenses Total	575,275

570000 TRAVEL EXPENSES

571100 BOARD & LODGING <i>Commissioner travel; Hotels/2 conferences</i>	3,500
572100 COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT <i>National Conference air fare</i>	750
573100 STATE-OWNED TRANSPORT <i>.32/mile; 12.50/day</i>	1,000

574500 PERSONAL VEHICLE MILEAGE *Commissioner, staff travel .70/mile* 1,500
Travel Expenses Total **6,750**

544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES *Counseling services* **2,201,500**
Assumes 11,500 hours counseling @185; 400 admission assessments @300

TOTAL ALL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES **2,989,375**

APPROPRIATION

3,208,877

CASH FUND STATUS

BALANCE 07/01/25	395,439
PLUS PROJECTED REVENUE FYE25-26	+ <u>2,995,000</u>
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FY25-26	3,390,439
MINUS PROJECTED EXPENDITURES FY25-26	- <u>2,989,375</u>
PROJECTED BALANCE 06/30/26	<u>401,064</u>