

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 14, 2025**

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m.

Roll Call: Present in person: Leckband, Lutz, Lambert and Zohner. Absent excused: Moore, Volnek 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 November 1, 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 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 August 22, 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, Zohner and Lambert.

Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Transfer Administrative Support and Move Program Office to Nebraska Racing and Gaming Commission facility.

The Commission heard a presentation by Casey Ricketts, Executive Director of the Nebraska Racing and Gaming Commission explaining a proposal to move the program office to the NRGCC facility and establish a closer collaboration on common subjects. Action by the Legislature would be required. The relationship between the two agencies would be described in a memorandum of understanding. Policy and budget issues would remain in the discretion of the Commission on Problem Gambling, including all subject matters described in state statutes. Commissioner Leckband move for adoption of a resolution approving the proposal, seconded by Commissioner Zohner. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Director Narrative Report: Legislation; Administrative Services Financial Reports; Operations 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 7: Argus Communications Progress Report

Jessica MacDonald presented examples of daily media messages that promote Gamblers Assistance on the digital platforms Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. Her presentation also included photos of messages displayed at University of Nebraska athletic events, audio of a radio interview broadcast during games, and a sample of a commercial shown during television broadcasts. The mockup of the changes to the program webpage showed consistent messages that coincide with the other messages created by Argus.

Agenda Item 8: Approve increases to counselor contracts for FY25-26

Meeting materials included a list of contracts with counseling services for the current fiscal year for which award amounts are needed to assure payment to counselors through the upcoming months. Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the increases, seconded by Commissioner Lambert. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 9: Training contracts with Evergreen Council and Bellevue University.

The Director informed the Commission that Bellevue University has given notice of intent to discontinue offering counseling training effective March 31, 2026. A search will begin for alternatives and the results will be reported to the Commission.

Agenda Item 10: Approve two new counselor contracts for FY25-26

Meeting materials included a proposals for approval of new counselor contracts for Kerry Ropte of Lincoln and Albert Sparks of Omaha.

Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the new contracts, seconded by Commissioner Lambert. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 11: Issue new Provisional Counselor certificate

Meeting materials included application for Provisional Certification by Phillip Edwards. The application was complete and complied with Program standards, and approved by the Certification Advisory Board. Commissioner Zohner moved for approval of the certificate, seconded by Commissioner Leckband. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 12: Upgrade certificate

Meeting materials included an application to upgrade counselor Emilia Maycock from provisional status to full certification. The application complies with Program standards and has been approved by the Certification Advisory Board. Commissioner Leckband moved for approval of the certificate, seconded by Commissioner Lambert. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Executive Session

At 11:20 a.m., Commissioner Zohner moved to adjourn the public meeting and enter Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Leckband. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried. The Commission then went into Executive Session and members of the public were asked to leave the meeting room. At 12:05 p.m., Commissioner Leckband moved to end the

executive session and resume the public meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zohner. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

The Commission then resumed the public session. Commissioner Leckband moved adoption of a resolution establishing counseling services rates to begin January 1, 2026, as follows: outpatient counseling rate reduced from \$185 per hour to \$160 per hour; urgent care rate reduced from \$185 per hour to \$125 per hour; new client admission assessments reduced from \$300 per assessment to \$230 per assessment. Commissioner Lambert seconded the motion. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Leckband, Lutz, Zohner and Lambert. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 p.m.

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

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 13, 2026, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at a location in Lincoln to be determined.

ATTEST:

Todd Zohner, Secretary

NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
NOVEMBER 14, 2025
DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TODAY'S AGENDA

At this meeting the Commission will be asked to consider the following three major proposals:

TRANSFER OFFICE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO RACING & GAMING COMMISSION

Item 6 on today's agenda is discussion of a proposal to relocate the Program office from Whitehall campus to the Racing & Gaming Commission space in the Williamsburg commercial development in south Lincoln. This will include transferring administrative support functions from the Department of Revenue to NRCG. If both commissions approve the transfer will require amendment to a statute, payment of cost of the facility improvements and furnishings, and transfer of digital support systems. Casey Ricketts, Executive Director of the NRCG will attend the meeting to present this proposal.

LOSS OF BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY TRAINING PLATFORM

The administration at Bellevue University has decided to end our contract for presentation of our counselor training program on March 31, 2026. We will search for a replacement that is willing to present the training. If none can be found, our training may be discontinued and students wishing to be trained will be referred to other resources.

CONTINGENCY PLAN TO REDUCE SECOND HALF OF YEAR SPENDING

Item 13 on the agenda today is a proposal to reduce spending by a combination of changes, the main one of which is lower rates of payment to counselors. The meeting materials include an up-to-date revised budget for this year; a proposed contingency budget cutting spending starting January 1, 2026; and a projected program budget for the new year starting July 1, 2026.

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Meeting materials include state accounting financial reports and internal spreadsheets showing results of operations so far this 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. Without rate changes projected spending on counseling is \$2,247,500 – 74% of the total. The current budget is attached.

GAMBLING OUTLOOK

Casino expansion continues in Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, and Ogallala. Dakota City is under construction; Columbus appears to be finished. Nationwide casino gambling appears to be leveling off.

The other gaming situation in Nebraska is the "skill" games that generate a significant volume of our counseling demand. The promoters of these devices are required to pay 5% tax quarterly. Gamblers Assistance first transfer is \$34,902. At this rate the total for the year from this source will be \$140,000.

Our share of the casino gaming tax revenue has averaged \$110,000 for the past 7 months. Revenue from this source is projected to equal \$1.3 million for the year.

First quarter transfers from Lottery were \$697,594, about \$2,000 less than last year. However projections for the rest of the year are for lower amounts. For our purposes a conservative projection is \$1.1 million total.

LEGISLATION

The testimony at the Legislature’s interim study was uninformative. Our presentation illustrated the types of problems that our clients are having after gambling on these devices. Mapping the locations showed that the devices are found all over the state. The true amount of money that customers put at risk playing on the devices is not yet known.

BUDGET CONTROLS

Last summer Governor Pillen announced his desire to cut state spending by about 10%. 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 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.

David Geier

November 14, 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>	400,000
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 <i>Commissioner, staff travel .70/mile</i>	1,500
Travel Expenses Total	6,750

544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES <i>Counseling services</i>	2,247,500
<i>Assumes 11,500 hours counseling @185; 400 admission assessments @300</i>	

TOTAL ALL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES **3,035,375**

APPROPRIATION

3,208,877

CASH FUND STATUS

BALANCE 07/01/25

395,439

PLUS PROJECTED REVENUE FYE25-26

+ 2,995,000

TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FY25-26

3,390,439

MINUS PROJECTED EXPENDITURES FY25-26

- 3,035,375

PROJECTED BALANCE 06/30/26

355,064