

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005

In the fall of 1993, at the time the Québec government established the first casino, a wide range of measures for the protection of gamblers were put into place, including *Gambling: help and referral*, because of the need to make people aware that gambling is for some, not a game anymore. The helpline soon became the reference when one was looking for help for gambling-related problems. The service, provided by the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montréal, has been financed by Loto-Québec from 1993 to 2001, and since April 2001, by the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec*.

Gambling: help and referral is a helpline offering information, listening and support on compulsive gambling, as well as referral for all available help in the field. The helpline is available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, throughout Québec. The personnel responds to several types of demands and needs : relevant reflections on the caller's gambling habits, support and empathy in moments of great distress, and stabilization of callers before their referral to resources specialized in crisis situations.

Between November 15th, 1993, and March 31st 2005, near 90 000 people turned to *Gambling: help and referral* for help or information. The number of Anglophones who used the helpline accounts for more than 9% of the callers.

The anonymous and confidential nature of the communications allows people to talk about their difficulties without being afraid to be identified. In fact, suffering, shame, despair, anxiety and insecurity are often part of the caller's burden.

Of the 12,367 calls in 2004-2005, 78% of the callers were worried about their gambling habits (32% were women and 46 % were men). Among the other calls, 8% came from peers of a gambler (brother, sister, or friend); 4% were spouses; 2% were parents; and 8% were field workers. Adults accounted for 96% of the calls, 3% were elderly people and 1% were teenagers and children.

Requests can be divided in the following categories:

- ◆ requests for listening and support from gamblers themselves, their spouses, their peers and parents amount to 4% of calls;

- ◆ requests for general information amount to 33% of calls;
- ◆ requests for therapy, counselling, self-support groups, or other related requests as budgeting, help for problems related to violence in family, drug abuse or suicide amount to 63% of calls.

We wish to underline that 37% of calls were directly handled by the staff of *Gambling: help and referral*.

Among the types of games mentioned the most often by callers were video-lotteries (84% of the mentions), the slot machines at the casinos (7%), and the lotteries (5 %). We have noted an increase in craps games and sports betting.

As for the geographic origin of the calls, 48% originate from Greater Montréal, 12% from *Montréal*, 10% from Québec area, 4% from *Outaouais*, and 26% from the other regions of Québec.

Concerning public relations activities, *Gambling: help and referral* participated in 50 activities, 15 of which were television or radio broadcasts. In total, *Gambling: help and referral* was the subject of 96 publications in the media.

According to its mandate of referring to the appropriate service, the helpline has directed 68 people with complaints against organizations or establishments to the appropriate authorities, and has received no complaint concerning its services.

The continuing training program responds to different needs of the personnel regarding the evolution of our understanding of compulsive gambling. Therefore, Mr. John Topp, director of Pavillon Foster, met with our team to describe the many services offered to gamblers and others affected by the problem. Also, Mrs. Éveline Laurin, counselor at the *Centre de prévention du suicide de Lanaudière* shared her experience in the evaluation of suicidal distress of callers. Finally, Mr. Guy J. Giguère, human resource coach, discussed with the personnel the handling of calls of distressed people and how to keep one's emotional stability while dealing with a suffering clientele.

Participation in special events:

- Week of the Montréal Bar, April 2004 ;

- Responsible Gambling Congress, Toronto, April 2004 ;
- *Journée sur le jeu pathologique, 72e congrès de l'ACFAS*, May 2004 ;
- National Problem Gambling Council, Phoenix, USA, June 2004 ;
- Insight Nova Scotia Conference, Halifax, October 2004 ;
- *Entretiens Jacques Cartier*: conference on gambling, October 2004;
- XXXIInd Congress of *l'Association des Intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec*, October 2004 ;
- Congress of *l'Ordre des Infirmières et Infirmiers du Québec*, November 2004 ;
- Conference by Mrs. Monique Cantin, Director of Communications, on ***Gambling : Help and Referral, 10 years later*** at the International Conference on Gambling and Public Welfare in Beijing and Macau, China, December 2004.

Publicity:

- Magazine *L'Intervenant*, 2004-2005, (4 editions);
- *L'Infirmière du Québec* ;
- *Magazine du Regroupement des Policiers de Laval* ;
- *L'Agenda Scolaire, les éditions Le Point* ;
- *La Gazette des Femmes*, 3 editions ;
- *L'Express et La Parole*, Drummondville ;
- *Le Soleil*, Québec, winter of 2004 ;
- *Magazine Le Point*, Montréal, Québec and Trois-Rivières ;
- Bulletin *Le Point de Repère*, Lévis ;
- Bulletin of *L'Association des Infirmières en Info-Santé* ;
- Bell Directories, Yellow Pages ;
- More than twenty Agendas of different groups and weeklies.

Promotional campaigns :

- *Alstom Télécity Inc.*, in the Montréal metro, fall of 2004 ;
- *MétraMédiaPlus* with advertising in buses of four targeted regions (*Lanaudière, Chaudière-Appalaches, Laurentides, Montérégie*), fall of 2004 and winter 2005 ;
- Viacom with advertising at bus shelters and billboards in the largest cities of the Province, fall of 2004 and winter 2005.

During the winter of 2005, the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* has launched a major multimedia campaign to promote awareness of excessive gambling and advertise our service. We thank them for this initiative.

The website can now be visited in French and in English at www.jeu-aidereference.qc.ca and we thank *Les Productions du Sixième Inc.* for the design and production of this website.

We cannot end this report without mentioning that the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montréal, the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec* and Loto-Québec have agreed to limit the use of the name SOS-JEUX to the promotional materials of Loto-Québec and the prevention messages displayed on their gambling machines. Moreover, the helpline is not associated anymore with the publicity on Loto-Québec's products.

Day after day since 1993, the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montréal takes up the challenge : to manage a 24/7 service on compulsive gambling which responds to the needs of people having a problem with compulsive gambling as well as their relatives. The Centre insures that its functions within strict financial parameters. An updated data bank, extensive and reliable as possible, keeps up with the development of public and private resources for people having problems with compulsive gambling. Four years after free services were made available for gamblers and their peers, the Centre makes sure that they are well known throughout the Province through its service ***Gambling : help and referral.***

For eleven years, we have pursued this objective : to offer a reliable and quality service of information, referral and support to the Québec population. We will continue to do all we can to justify the trust of the public and of our sponsors who have supported us since 1993.

**GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL
STATISTICAL REPORT 2004-2005**

SOURCE OF ENQUIRIES

Associations	10
Colleges, Schools, Universities	82
Communications Media	46
Industry, Commerces	169
Parapublic services	108
CLSC	22
Private agencies	328
Professional persons	140
Public in general:	
Men	5 643
Women	3 945
Parents	292
Peers	972
Spouses	537
Public services	70
Religious organizations	3

TOTAL **12 367**

GEOGRAPHIC REGION

Region 01, Bas Saint-Laurent	150
Region 02, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	266
Region 03, Québec	1 181
Region 04, Mauricie-Centre du Québec	482
Region 05, Estrie	240
Region 06, Montréal	5 921
Region 07, Outaouais	479
Region 08, Abitibi-Témiscamingue	113
Region 09, Côte-Nord	74
Region 10, Nord du Québec	24
Region 11, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	55
Region 12, Chaudière-Appalaches	157
Region 13, Laval	516
Region 14, Lanaudière	429
Region 15, Laurentides	567
Region 16, Montérégie	1 534
Other regions	179

TOTAL **12 367**

TYPE OF GAMBLING

Arcades	2
Bingo	25
Card games	27
Casino:	
Slot machines	333
Black Jack, roulette, baccarat	43
Craps games	38
Games and pool	3
Horse races	12
Lottery	240
Pool betting on sports	70
Video-lotteries	4 291
Others	42
TOTAL	5 126

AGE CATEGORIES

Adults	11 896
Children	4
Senior citizens	413
Teens	54
TOTAL	12 367

TYPE OF ENQUIRIES

Counselling	104
Listening and support	788
Support group:	
Gamblers	2 147
Parents	131
Spouses and Peers	678
General Information:	
Gamblers' Profile	317
Gambling: help and referral	4 310
Prevention	41
Self-Exclusion	31
Residential readaptation:	
Private services	488
Parapublic services	123
Out-patient treatment:	
Private services	1 339
Parapublic services	3 685
Social reintegration	3

Related requests:	
Budget counselling	208
Drug addiction	186
Legal services	10
Other requests	3 567
Shelters	51
Suicide	255
Violence	53
Complaints against services	68

TOTAL 18 583

TYPE OF REFERRALS

Directed to appropriate resource	11 614
Referral calls by our staff	136
Short term service	6 804
Services required insufficient	9
Services required unavailable	20

TOTAL 18 583

FOLLOW-UP CALLS

Additional communication with client or other	19
Communication with services	283

TOTAL 302

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Information sessions (attendance : 81 persons)	07
Meetings and seminars	28
Radio, TV	15

TOTAL 50

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