

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007

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*, implemented 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 offers information, listening and support on compulsive gambling, as well as referral to 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. 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.

An Advisory Committee was set up in 2006-2007 to make recommendations to the Centre regarding *Gambling: help and referral's* mandate as requested by the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec*. This Advisory Committee held two meetings this year.

Between November 15th, 1993, and March 31st 2007, more than 115,000 people turned to *Gambling: help and referral* for help or information. 945 Anglophones people used the helpline this year.

Of the 11,467 calls in 2006-2007, 73% of the callers were worried about their gambling habits (28% were women and 45% were men). Among the other calls, 9% came from peers of

a gambler (brother, sister, or friend); 5% from spouses; 3% from parents; and 10% from field workers. Adults accounted for 95.5% of the calls, 3.5% were elderly people and 1% of the calls were from 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 9% of calls;
- ◆ Requests for general information amount to 28% of calls;
- ◆ Requests for therapy, counselling, self-support groups, or other related requests as budgeting, family violence, substance abuse or suicide amount to 63% of calls.

We wish to underline that 42% of calls were directly handled by the staff of *Gambling: help and referral* thus more than one on three.

Among the types of games mentioned most often by callers were video-lotteries (77% of the mentions), the slot machines at the casinos (8%), and the lotteries (7%).

As for the geographic origin of the calls, 51% originate from Greater Montréal, 12% from *Montérégie*, 9% from Québec area, 3% from *Outaouais*, and 50% from the other regions of Québec.

Concerning public relations activities, *Gambling: help and referral* participated in 35 activities, 17 of which were television or radio broadcasts. In total, *Gambling: help and referral* was the subject of 209 mentions in publications or media.

According to its mandate of referring to the appropriate service, the helpline has directed 127 people with complaints against organizations or establishments to the appropriate authorities. Our service was the object of 2 complaints in 2005-2006 and of one in 2006-2007, all dealt with following our current protocol.

Since the field of intervention for gambling is in constant evolution, it requires a training

program which responds promptly to the specific needs of the personnel. This year, we have made our team available to follow the training program of the Centre Dollard-Cormier, *Les Jeudis CDC*. Three of our counselors have attended a training day on Gambling and two others on Drug addictions and Youth. We also had a session with Mr. Jacques Ducharme, M. Ps. for an exchange with our team on difficult calls and how to handle them. Finally, Mrs. Dolly Démitro, founder and director of *Centre de Ressourcement Attitude*, shared with the team on the roots of emotional dependency.

With its booth :

- Week of the Bar of Montréal, April 2006;
- Annual Conference of the *Déléguées et Délégués sociaux FTQ*, October 2006;
- *Centre d'écoute et de référence Halte-Ami* : Thematic Weeks, November 2006, February and March 2007;
- *Collège Jean-Eudes*, March 2007.

Participation in special events:

- Responsible Gambling Council, participation to the Discovery 2006 conference, April 2006;
- *Domrémy Mauricie – Centre du Québec*, *journée des partenaires: intégration des services et dépendance*, May 2006;
- *Association québécoise des parents et amis du malade mental*, conferences on compulsive buying, May 2006, obsessive-compulsive troubles, September 2006;
- Conference «*Prévenir et intervenir en toxicomanie : de multiples défis*» of the *Association des Intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec*, October 2006;
- Suicide prevention Centre Le Faubourg, *8^e journée conférences sur la promotion du mieux-être*, November 2006, and conference «*Être une femme et intervenir auprès des hommes*», February 2007 ;
- Centre St-Pierre, conference «*Grandir ou souffrir à force d'aider*», December 2006 ;
- Alberta Gaming Research Institute, 6th annual conference on gambling research: addressing gambling-related harm through evidence-based practices, March 2007.

Publicity:

- Advertising insert, Conference of *l'Ordre des Infirmières et Infirmiers du Québec*, November 2006;
- Magazine *L'Intervenant*, 2006-2007, (4 issues);
- *L'Infirmière du Québec* ;
- *La Gazette des Femmes*;
- *L'Express et La Parole*, Drummondville;
- *Le Journal de Québec*, Winter of 2007;
- Magazine *Le Point*, Montréal, Québec and Trois-Rivières;
- *Journal Métro*, winter 2007;
- *24 heures*, winter 2007;
- Bulletin *Le Point de Repère*, Lévis ;
- Bell Directories and Yellow Pages;
- More than twenty Agendas of different groups and weeklies.

Promotional campaigns:

- *Alstom Télécity Inc.*, in the Montréal metro, fall of 2006;
- *MétroMédiaPlus* with advertising in buses of four targeted regions (*Lanaudière, Chaudière-Appalaches, Laurentides, Montérégie*), fall of 2006; Métrovision in the Montréal metro stations, winter 2007;
- CBS *Affichage* with advertising on bus shelters and billboards in the largest cities of the Province, fall of 2006 and winter 2007.

During the spring of 2006 and the winter of 2007, the *Fondation Mise sur toi* and the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*, have launched major multimedia campaigns to promote awareness of excessive gambling and advertise our service. We thank them for this initiative.

Also, since January 2006, help is available online (in French only for now) on the website of *Gambling: Help and Referral*, at www.jeu-aidereference.qc.ca.

TWO PILOT PROJECTS

1. Electronic referral

The *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* has given the Centre the mandate to set up two pilot projects concerning problem gambling.

The first project consisted of producing a new version of the Web site of *Gambling: Help and Referral*, to improve interaction and offer help online. Since January 2006, people can ask for help and referral by email (for francophone only at the present time); two counsellors are available to answer these demands. The new web site was launched in the winter of 2007.

On the new web site, general information and online help are available. Right at the beginning, the user has to choose between asking for help and asking for information.

The web site was created by Fjord Marketing and is easy to navigate, user-friendly and designed for people unfamiliar with Internet. It takes into account that the target users come from different age groups, different social and geographic origins. Furthermore, it is available not only to gamblers, but also to their spouses and other members of their families, their peers and field workers. The project continued until March 31, 2007 and we received 212 requests during the last 12 months.

2. Telecounselling

The second mandate entrusted to the Centre is concerning short term therapy over the phone. Gambling problems come to the forefront as gaming becomes more and more available. Helping gamblers is a challenge that the *ministère de la Santé et des services sociaux* has already undertaken through a network of rehabilitation centres throughout the Province; but these centres are often concentrated within urban areas. Progressively, as gambling practises diversify, the *Ministère* is exploring different avenues innovating in ways to make the offer of services more flexible, especially outside urban regions.

In this light, the *Ministère* has mandated the Centre to explore telecounselling. A short term model has been proposed which set the content of seven telephone sessions.

In order to be able to compare services, the Information and Referral Centre has decided to model its telecounselling interventions on the global model of *Université Laval*. But because of the particularity of short term interventions, and of our aim at therapy, that basic model was modified. The challenge given the Centre was to put in place conditions

to elicit behaviour changes for the client, and to do so by means of the telephone.

A clinical supervisor and qualified counsellors have offered telecounselling to as many as 84 gamblers. The clients came from different regions around the Province of Québec. The experimental phase ended in August 2006. The preliminary results indicate that the people who chose to participate in this program had serious difficulties with gambling and that the telecounselling offered to them was very much appreciated.

CONCLUSION

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 it functions within strict financial parameters. An updated data bank, as extensive and reliable as possible, keeps up with the development of public and private resources for people having problems with compulsive gambling. For six years now, free services are available for gamblers and their peers. *Gambling: help and referral* makes sure that they are well known throughout the Province.

For fourteen 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 2006-2007**

SOURCE OF ENQUIRIES

Associations	19
Colleges, Schools, Universities	113
Communications Media	62
Industry, Commerces	352
Labor & Unions	4
Parapublic services	138
CLSC	36
Private agencies	230
Professional persons	107
Public in general:	
Men	5 162
Women	3 166
Parents	377
Peers	1 062
Spouses	573
Public services	61
Religious organizations	5
TOTAL	11 467

GEOGRAPHIC REGION

Region 01, Bas-Saint-Laurent	178
Region 02, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	212
Region 03, Capitale Nationale	996
Region 04, Mauricie et Centre du Québec	384
Region 05, Estrie	225
Region 06, Montréal	5 825
Region 07, Outaouais	378
Region 08, Abitibi-Témiscamingue	123
Region 09, Côte-Nord	80
Region 10, Nord-du-Québec	13
Region 11, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	66
Region 12, Chaudière-Appalaches	171
Region 13, Laval	381
Region 14, Lanaudière	397
Region 15, Laurentides	578
Region 16, Montérégie	1 337
Other regions	123
TOTAL	11 467

TYPE OF GAMBLING

Arcades	1
Bingo	29
Card games	29

Casino:

Slot machines	354
Black Jack, roulette, baccarat	54
Craps games	2
Cyberdependency	106
Horse races	4
Lottery	306
Pool betting on sports	41
Video-lotteries	3 262
Others	69
TOTAL	4 257

AGE CATEGORIES

Adults	10 948
Children	6
Senior citizens	379
Teens	134
TOTAL	11 467

TYPE OF ENQUIRIES

Counselling	81
Listening and support	1 523
Support group:	
Gamblers	1 738
Parents	170
Spouses and Peers	842
General Information:	
Codependency	59
Gamblers' Profile	282
Gambling	192
Gambling: help and referral	4 365
Prevention	92
Self-Exclusion	31
Residential readaptation:	
Private services	363
Parapublic services	111
Out-patient treatment:	
Private services	810
Parapublic services	3 510
Telecounselling	179
Relapse	17
Social reintegration	2
Related requests:	
Budget counselling	151
Drug addiction	170
Legal services	14
Other requests	2 656
Shelters	53
Suicide	201

Violence	105
Complaints against services	127
TOTAL	17 844

TYPE OF REFERRALS

Directed to appropriate resource	10 182
Referral calls by our staff	23
Short term service	7 559
Services required insufficient	67
Services required unavailable	13
TOTAL	17 844

FOLLOW-UP CALLS

Additional communication with clients or others	9
Communication with services	305

TOTAL 314

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Information sessions (attendance: 52 persons)	07
Meetings and seminars	26
Radio, TV	17

TOTAL 50

Gambling: Help and Referral

(514) 527-0140
1 800 461 0140
1 866 SOS JEUX

Fax: (514) 527-9712

Help online:
www.jeu-aidereference.qc.ca

Lorraine Bilocq Lebeau
Executive Director
crgm@info-reference.qc.ca

Monique Cantin
Communications Director
m.cantin@info-reference.qc.ca

Hélène Hamel
Coordinator
jar@info-reference.qc.ca