

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

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.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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, notably on online gambling and cyberdependency.

HELP ONLINE

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 and 186 people have used this service in 2007-2008. The web site has received 52 916 visits, 708 562 hits, and 147 225 pages were reviewed in 2007-2008.

TYPE OF CALLS

Between November 15th, 1993, and March 31st 2008, more than 125 000 people turned to *Gambling: help and referral* for help or information. 754

Anglophones people used the helpline this year. Of the 10 070 calls in 2007-2008, 72% of the callers were worried about their gambling habits (27% were women and 45% were men). Among the other calls, 7% came from peers of a gambler (brother, sister, or friend); 5% from spouses; 4% from parents; and 12% from field workers. Adults accounted for 96% of the calls, 3% 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 7% of calls;
- ◆ Requests for general information amount to 34% of calls;
- ◆ Requests for therapy, counselling, self-support groups, or other related requests as budgeting, family violence, substance abuse or suicide amount to 59% of calls.

We wish to underline that 45% of calls were directly handled by the staff of *Gambling: help and referral* and did not need a referral. Among the types of games mentioned most often by callers were video-lotteries (78% of the mentions), the slot machines at the casinos (7%), and the lotteries (5.5%). As for the geographic origin of the calls, 53% originate from Greater Montréal, 13% from *Montréal*, 8% from Québec area, 3% from *Outaouais*, and 23% from the other regions of Québec.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Concerning public relations activities, *Gambling: help and referral* participated in 39 activities, 12 of which were television or radio broadcasts. In total, *Gambling: help and referral* was the subject of 188 mentions in publications or media.

According to its mandate of referring to the appropriate service, the helpline has directed 35 people with complaints against organizations or establishments to the appropriate authorities. Our service was the object of no complaints in 2007-2008; any complaint would have been dealt with, in accordance with our current protocol.

TRAINING PROGRAM

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 allowed our team to follow the training program of the Centre Dollard-Cormier, *Les Jeux CDC*. Three of our

counselors have attended a training day on addictions cognitive deficiency; three others participated in a day's awareness on the experience of the relatives in the field of addictions. We have also had Mr. Yves Bélanger, psychoeducator, for a session with our team on «*Grandir ou souffrir à force d'aider*». Finally, Mrs. Rollande Chainey, psychologist, at the *Centre Dollard-Cormier*, gave us training on the motivational approach with people experiencing addiction problems.

PARTICIPATION IN SPECIAL EVENTS :

- Tour of the Partners of the *RISQ* concerning the new aspects of drug dependency and rehabilitation, Montréal region, April 2007;
- Canadian Mental Health Association, Congress on «*Travailler au bien commun Inspiration, motivation et engagement*», May 2007 ;
- Annual congress «*L'aide aux proches des personnes dépendantes*» *Le Passage, Centre d'aide aux proches*, May 2007 ;
- *Journée des partenaires sur les troubles concomitants en dépendance et en santé mentale, Domrémy Mauricie*, May 2007 ;
- *Centre québécois d'excellence pour la prévention et le traitement du jeu «Les multiples facettes du jeu»*, June 2007 ;
- *Journées professionnelles sur la santé mentale et la résilience, Conseil multidisciplinaire du Centre jeunesse de Montréal*, June 2007 ;
- Launching of a record and a book for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of *Maison and Fondation Jean Lapointe*, October 2007;
- *Colloque sur l'Écoute dans notre société, Centre d'Écoute et de Référence Halte-Ami*, October 2007 ;
- *XXXVe Colloque sur les dépendances et troubles concomitants, Association des Intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec*, October 2007 ;
- *11^{es} Journées Annuelles de Santé Publique, conférences on addictions*, November 2007.
- Congress on Gambling, Laval, December 2007.

WITH ITS BOOTH :

- Week of the Bar of Montréal, April 2007;
- *Semaine de sensibilisation au jeu responsable, Fondation Mise sur Toi*, September 2007.
- 20th Annual Conference of the *Déléguées et Délégués sociaux FTQ*, October 2007;
- *Centre d'Écoute et de Référence Halte-Ami: Thematic Weeks*, November 2007 and March 2008.

PUBLICITY:

- Advertising insert, Conference of *l'Ordre des Infirmières et Infirmiers du Québec*, November 2007;
- Magazine *L'Intervenant*, 2007-2008, (4 issues);
- *L'Infirmière du Québec* ;
- *La Gazette des Femmes*;
- *L'Express et La Parole*, Drummondville;
- Bulletin *Le Point de Repère*, Lévis ;
- Directories and Yellow Pages;
- More than twenty Agendas of different groups and weeklies.

PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS:

- *Alstom Télécity Inc.*, in the Montréal metro, fall of 2007;
- *MétoMédiaPlus* with advertising in buses of four targeted regions (*Lanaudière, Chaudière-Appalaches, Laurentides, Montérégie*), fall of 2007;
- *CBS Affichage* with advertising on bus shelters and billboards in the largest cities of the Province, fall of 2007 and winter 2008.

During the fall of 2007 and the winter of 2008, 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. Also, the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors, affiliated to McGill University, has published different awareness flyers with our phone numbers. We are grateful for these initiatives.

PILOT-PROJECTS

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

ELECTRONIC REFERRAL

The e-referral project was launched in January 2007 and was available throughout 2007-2008. On the new web site, general information and online help are available. As a first step, the user has to choose between asking for help or asking for information. This service is available not only to gamblers, but also to their spouses and other members of their families, their peers and to field workers. We received 212 requests during the first 12 months and 186 during 2007-2008.

TELECOUNSELLING

The second mandate entrusted to the Centre is concerning short term therapy, over the phone. The *ministère de la Santé et des services sociaux* has mandated the Centre to explore telecounselling. A short term model has been proposed which set the content for seven telephone sessions.

A clinical supervisor and qualified counsellors have offered telecounselling to as many as 84 gamblers. The clients came from different regions of the Province of Québec. The experimental phase ended in August 2006 and our final report was deposited to the *ministère de la Santé et des services sociaux* in December 2007.

Here are some elements that seem important to consider as working hypothesis in the future.

- Telecounselling presents a real positive potential for short term therapeutic impact when measured on moneys gambled and on the proportion of abstinent participants;
- In terms of attrition, telecounselling does not seem to be any less disadvantaged than any other mode of treatment;
- To serve the whole province of Québec with one main telephone service seem realistic;
- The personal contact with the counsellor has been the most appreciated element by the clients;
- The promotion of an eventual telecounselling service should be asymmetrical and should target the outskirts of large cities;
- Telecounselling allows reaching out to a great variety of populations in terms of sociodemographic characteristics;
- This clientele suffers from real gambling problems but possibly at a less severe level. Telecounselling would then present a real potential in early intervention;
- This clientele could finally be more fragile and hesitate to ask for help otherwise;
- The telephone model of intervention could meet the needs and expectations of a certain type of clients more than others. There could be a subgroup of gamblers more susceptible to be helped by telecounselling;
- Some gamblers could present a vulnerability to relapse that the telecounselling, on a short term basis, cannot address. The challenge in the future will be to identify the characteristics associated with this vulnerability in order to rapidly offer different modes of complementary treatment to more fragile participants;

- While staying in the theoretic field of short term intervention, it could still be possible to experiment with the possibility of being flexible with the duration of the intensive phase of the telecounselling thus allowing to insist on certain more difficult stages of treatment. One could even lengthen and intensify the follow-up phase, even offer a different and complementary service to the graduates of the telecounselling;

A reflexion could be done on how to diversify the offer of services. An open telephone support group available during, but also after the telecounselling phase, is certainly an interesting avenue.

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 seven years now, free services are available for gamblers and their peers. The personnel at *Gambling: help and referral* makes sure that they are well known throughout the Province.

For almost fifteen years, we have pursued this objective: to offer a reliable and quality service of information, referral and support to the Québec population in that field. 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 2007-2008**

SOURCE OF ENQUIRIES

Associations	33
Colleges, Schools, Universities	131
Communications Media	64
Individuals:	
Men	4 547
Women	2 744
Industry, Commerces	375
Labor & Unions	12
Parapublic services	137
CLSC	31
Parents	351
Peers	744
Private agencies	198
Professional persons	113
Public services	77
Religious organizations	1
Spouses	512
TOTAL	10 070

TYPE OF CONTACT

Email	186
Telephone	9 884
TOTAL	10 070

AGE CATEGORIES

Adults	9 687
Children	9
Senior citizens	287
Teens	87
TOTAL	10 070

GEOGRAPHIC REGION

Region 01, Bas-Saint-Laurent	112
Region 02, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	220
Region 03, Capitale Nationale	785
Region 04, Mauricie et Centre du Québec	304

Region 05, Estrie	192
Region 06, Montréal	5 357
Region 07, Outaouais	277
Region 08, Abitibi-Témiscamingue	85
Region 09, Côte-Nord	46
Region 10, Nord-du-Québec	16
Region 11, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	46
Region 12, Chaudière-Appalaches	159
Region 13, Laval	249
Region 14, Lanaudière	380
Region 15, Laurentides	413
Region 16, Montérégie	1 322
Other regions	107
TOTAL	10 070

TYPE OF GAMBLING

Bingo	15
Card (Poker, Others)	31
Casino:	
Craps games (Sic Bo, Craps)	3
Slot machines	172
Table Games (Black Jack, Roulette, Baccarat)	27
Cyberdependency	98
Internet (chat, shopping, stock, etc.)	
Electronic Games	
Online Gaming	
Horse races	4
Lottery	142
Pool betting on sports	18
VLT's	2 020
Others	65
TOTAL	2 596

TYPE OF ENQUIRIES

Counselling	45
General Information:	
Codependency	68
Gamblers' Profile	257
Gambling	209
Gambling: help and referral	4 577
Prevention	102

Self-Exclusion	53
In-Patient treatment:	
Parapublic services	90
Private services	462
Listening and support	1 156
Out-patient treatment:	
Parapublic services	3 147
Private services	575
Telecounselling	4
Relapse	22
Related requests:	
Budget counselling	163
Drug addiction	273
Legal services	8
Other requests	2 009
Shelters	47
Suicide	147
Violence	24
Social Reintegration	2
Support group:	
Gamblers	1 380
Parents	130
Spouses and Peers	561
Complaints against services	35

TOTAL 15 546

TYPE OF REFERRALS

Directed to appropriate resource	8 457
Referral calls by our staff	46
Services required insufficient	84
Services required unavailable	6
Service rendered without referrals	6 953
TOTAL	15 546

FOLLOW-UP CALLS

Additional communications	
With clients	12
For research and update	407

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Information sessions (attendance : 15 persons)	3
Meetings and seminars	24
Radio, TV	12

TOTAL 39

TOTAL

419

Gambling: Help and Referral

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