

2013 NATIONAL SURVEY OF PROBLEM GAMBLING SERVICES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report describes the most comprehensive collection of information ever gathered about problem gambling services in the United States. Unlike other mental health and addiction services, there is the absence of a federal agency designated to fund and guide programs and policies addressing problem gambling; this has contributed to the need for non-governmental entities to gather national data to better inform individual state efforts and track national trends. The Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators (APGSA) was formed in 2000 to “support the development of services that will reduce the impact of problem gambling”. Central to this mission, the APGSA began sponsoring national problem gambling service surveys in 2006. This report is the 4th in the series and the first to be co-sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG).

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is a private non-profit organization whose mission is “to increase public awareness of pathological gambling, ensure the widespread availability of treatment for problem gamblers and their families, and to encourage research and programs for prevention and education.” Like the APGSA, the NCPG does not take a philosophical position for or against legalized gambling. The NCPG spearheads efforts to address problem gambling at the national level, while state level efforts are primarily delegated to NCPG affiliate members. Each state is limited to having one affiliate membership to the NCPG. NCPG affiliate members are also known as NCPG Affiliate Chapters and in this report will be referred to as “Affiliates.” Each Affiliate is a non-profit organization whose mission reflects that of the NCPG.

With the additional support of the NCPG, two national surveys were fielded: one designed to collect information on publicly funded problem gambling services from 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and the other to capture information on problem gambling services delivered by NCPG Affiliates. Although this effort represents the most comprehensive collection of information on problem gambling services in the United States, information gathered was from the limited universe of services funded by state agencies with legislated or line-itemed budgets identified for use in reducing gambling related harm and from efforts by NCPG Affiliates. Problem gambling services provided by tribal governments, privately funded entities such as health insurers, and community organizations such as Gamblers Anonymous, were not collected in this survey.

The objectives were to collect multi-purpose data that can be used to: assist federal and state governments in assessing the nature and extent of problem gambling treatment, prevention, and research services provided in state-supported systems and systems funded by NCPG Affiliates; analyze problem gambling services trends and conduct comparative analyses; generate a national directory of state agencies and NCPG Affiliates with problem gambling service oversight responsibilities; explore for associations between state level variables of interest, including size and scope of gaming industry, estimated numbers of problem gamblers, numbers of persons enrolled into state support and NCPG Affiliate supported gambling treatment, problem gambling helpline call volume, and total funding investment into problem gambling services.

The highlights of this study's findings include:

- The total number of states that reported publicly funded problem gambling services increased from 37 in 2010 to 39 in 2013.
- The total amount of public funding allocated for problem gambling services in the U.S. was \$60.6 million; on a state-by-state basis, the amounts ranged from Washington, D.C. and the 11 states that did not provide any dedicated funding for problem gambling services to \$8.7 million in California.
- For those states that invest in problem gambling services, per capita allocations for problem gambling services ranged from \$0.01 in Colorado to \$1.42 in Delaware. The average per capita allocation for problem gambling services in the 39 states with publicly funded services was 32 cents. When the 11 states without dedicated funding are included, the national average drops to 25 cents per capita.
- The average per capita funding level across all states with public funding dropped slightly between 2010 and 2013 from 34 cents to 32 cents per capita. Individually, a nearly equal number of states reported decreased funding (n=20) as those that reported funding increases (n=19) since the 2010 survey.
- At the time this survey was conducted, there were 34 states with active NCPG Affiliate Chapters. NCPG Affiliate budgets were dramatically smaller than the state agency budgets in most states—including four states where Affiliates had no revenue in state fiscal year 2013. The median NCPG State Affiliate per capita budget was four cents.
- Substance use disorders are about 3.6 times more common than gambling disorders, while public funding for substance abuse treatment is about 281 times greater than public funding for all problem gambling services (\$17 billion: \$60.6 million).
- Across all states, there is a lack of uniformity regarding what types of problem gambling services are funded. The most commonly supported services provided by state agencies and NCPG Affiliates were, respectively, helplines (87%; 56%), problem gambling awareness programs (85%; 91%), and problem gambling treatment (82%; 26%).
- Combining data from the APGSA and NCPG Affiliate surveys, we found that slightly less than half (45%) of the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia had anyone within the state whose full-time job was to administer problem gambling services. Only 15 states funded one or more full-time state employee positions dedicated to administering problem gambling programs. Among the 34 NCPG State Affiliates, over one-third operated with an all-volunteer staff and board.
- The survey identified 25 organizations that operate problem gambling helplines; it is not uncommon for more than one gambling helpline number to be marketed in the same state.
- In 2012, there were an estimated 5.77 million disordered gamblers in the U.S. in need of treatment.¹ Of this number, 10,387 individuals were treated in U.S. state-funded problem

¹ Based on an estimated past year pathological gambling prevalence rate of 2.2 % (Williams, Volberg & Stevens, 2012) and the 2013 U.S. adult (age 18+) population estimate of 262,070,808 (U.S. Census, 2013).

gambling treatment programs. These figures suggest that in 2012 state-funded treatment was provided to less than one quarter of one percent (0.18%) of those in need.

- The average cost of problem gambling treatment, per client treatment episode, was \$1,174; by comparison, the average cost of substance abuse treatment was reported by Etner et al (2006) to be \$1,583.
- Results of each of the past four National Problem Gambling Services Surveys indicate spending on research and evaluation systems has been very low. In 2013, APGSA Survey respondents reported an average of 1.6% of their budgets was spent on “research” (defined as prevalence studies, risk behavior surveys, issue research), and an average of 1.5% was spent on program evaluation.
- When asked “What is your state’s largest gap in problem gambling services?” nearly 60% of respondents indicated a lack of adequate funding, followed by a lack of public awareness of problem gambling, and a lack of treatment options for problem gamblers.
- When asked, “What is your state’s greatest obstacle in meeting service needs to address problem gambling?” 40% of APGSA Survey respondents and 58% of NCPG Affiliate respondents chose “inadequate funding”—the most commonly endorsed response.
- State problem gambling service funding levels were significantly associated with: gaming revenue produced within a state; the number of legalized types of gambling; the estimated number of adult problem gamblers within a state; and the number of problem gamblers treated.
- “Calls for help” to problem gambling helplines were significantly associated with: gaming revenue produced within a state; the number of legalized types of gambling within a state; and the estimated number of adult problem gamblers within a state.
- The only variable that was significantly associated with gambling treatment utilization was spending on problem gambling services as calculated by combining state agency problem gambling service budgets with unduplicated spending by NCPG Affiliates.
- The lack of a clear relationship between the number of persons calling gambling helplines and receiving subsidized gambling treatment points to a central issue discussed throughout this report: there is a great level of disparity between states in terms of problem gambling service investment and problem gambling treatment infrastructure.