



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

Robert Ross
St. Joseph's
Rehabilitation Center

First Vice President

Ronald Williams
New York Therapeutic Community

Second Vice President

Beth Lawyer
North Star Chemical
Dependency Services

Third Vice President

Doug Apple
Samaritan Village

Treasurer

Anne Constantino
Horizon Health Services

Secretary

Sarah Church
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Immediate Past President

Chris Wilkins
Loyola Medical Associates

Public Policy

Kathleen Riddle
Outreach Project

By-Laws

Luke Nasta
Camelot of Staten Island

Cultural Diversity

Sonskeshana Kornegay
Queen's Reciprocity
The Art of Giving Back

Membership

John Tavolacci
Odyssey House

Members-at-Large

Richard Pruss
Samaritan Village
Mary Silberstein
Central Nassau Guidance &
Counseling Services, Inc.

Tammy Kinan

Northpointe Council, Inc.

Marty Teller

Finger Lakes Addictions
Counseling and Referral Agency

Executive Director

John J. Coppola

**New York Association of
Alcoholism and Substance
Abuse Providers, Inc.**

(P) 518.426.3122

(F) 518.426.1046

1 Columbia Place, Suite 400
Albany, New York 12207
www.asapnys.org

NEW YORK STATE GAMING COMMISSION PUBLIC FORUM

ADDRESSING PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE ERA OF EXPANDED GAMING

Wednesday, April 9, 2014

Empire State Plaza, Meeting Room 7, Albany, NY

ORAL TESTIMONY PRESENTED BY:

**JOHN COPPOLA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**New York Association of Alcoholism
and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc. (ASAP)**

Good afternoon. My name is John Coppola. I am the Executive Director of the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc., the statewide association that represents the interests of substance use disorder and problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery support services providers from throughout New York State. Included in our membership are close to 200 agencies that provide a comprehensive continuum of services, as well as statewide and regional coalitions of programs, and a number of affiliate and individual members.

Thank you for inviting ASAP to give testimony this afternoon at this very important public forum on Problem Gambling and Commercial Casino Development.

As New York State embarks on an era of expanded gaming, the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc. (ASAP) is pleased that the New York State Gaming Commission has made problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery a priority policy and business concern. With the expansion of gaming, New York State should expect that the number of individuals and families impacted by problem gambling will increase. Given this inevitability, we are pleased that you have focused this hearing, exclusively, on problem gambling. With the appropriate planning and attention to this serious public health issue:

- Public awareness about problem gambling can be increased
- Problem gambling can be prevented for at-risk persons
- Persons impacted by this illness can be effectively treated, and
- We can create the supports necessary for sustained problem gambling recovery

The 2013 National Survey of Problem Gambling Services tells us that 1.6% of New York State adults has a gambling disorder. According to the New York Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), approximately ONE MILLION New Yorkers currently have a gambling problem and “Twenty percent of adolescents currently have or are at risk of developing a gambling problem. Five percent of adults over 18 have a gambling problem.” (OASAS Problem Gambling Survey Statistics) The 2013 National Survey of Problem Gambling Services also states that, in 2012, New York ranked 2nd out of 50 states and the D.C. in combined lottery sales, commercial casino gaming revenues, and Indian gaming revenues with \$11.16 billion reported. In 2012, legalized gambling in New York included 29,145 electronic gaming machines, 14 Indian casinos, a traditional state lottery, video lottery, internet lotteries, racetrack casinos, pari-mutuel wagering, and charitable gaming. Less than two one-thousandths of one percent of that number is devoted to preventing and treating the social and public health problems related to problem gambling. The New York State Gaming Commission’s inclusion of *Measures To Address Problem Gambling* in their *Request for Applications to Develop and Operate A Gaming Facility in New York State* suggests we are ready to implement a much more thoughtful and well-resourced approach.

As New York State expands the availability of gambling, increasing the risk for problem gambling and its consequences, a statewide continuum of problem gambling services that includes a public awareness campaign, primary prevention, early intervention and treatment, recovery support, and other needed services must be put in place in every county. ASAP staff, our agency and coalition members, and our Problem Gambling Committee stand ready to partner with the NYS Gaming Commission to develop programs and services to combat compulsive and problem gambling. These programs and services should include:

Public Education and Increased Awareness of Problem Gambling

New York State spends more than \$90 million annually advertising gambling opportunities and encouraging New Yorkers to utilize those opportunities to gamble. ASAP recommends that NYS and companies that operate gaming use at least 10% of their advertising budgets to increase community awareness about problem gambling and the resources available in communities to prevent and treat the problem.

An effective comprehensive plan to address problem gambling must start with a public education campaign to help persons of all ages in communities throughout New York State to understand the continuum of gambling behaviors that range from healthy to unhealthy and problematic. This campaign must include promotion of healthy behaviors; information about resources that can be accessed to address risk factors particularly in communities close to gaming facilities and with high risk groups such as youth and older persons; information about treatment resources for persons who have developed problem gambling; and information about recovery supports for persons in recovery from their problem gambling disorder

The public education campaign should utilize all forms of media and all available communication channels. The message must be communicated in a culturally competent manner using evidence-based strategies and messaging. This campaign should be developed using communication experts and experts in prevention.

On-Site Resources for Problem Gambling

Staff well-trained to identify problems before they escalate and to appropriately intervene and refer persons needing help is a necessary component of a successful problem gambling plan. We recommend that all shifts should include staff persons knowledgeable about problem gambling, how to address on-site issues related to problem gambling, and resources available in the community to address problem gambling.

We support the use of Certified Addiction Recovery Coaches and Peer Bridgers on all shifts to address acute gambling problems when an individual is in crisis on the casino floor. We recommend that all casinos have agreements with local problem gambling and mental health services providers to provide on-site crisis services. Implementing these recommendations requires an on-site therapeutic setting where confidential services can be administered. It also requires signage throughout the casino alerting patrons how assistance can be accessed. People in crisis will only be able to access services if they are aware of them and they are easy to access.

Problem Gambling Signage

All casinos and gambling venues should prominently display in their facilities educational messages approved by the New York Gaming Commission in consultation with OASAS. These educational messages should include information about what problem gambling is, services available on-site for persons with a problem gambling issue, resources available in the surrounding community, and how to contact the Hopeline and other resources.

All casino and gambling venue advertising, literature, and correspondence should include a reference for persons needing information about or help with problem gambling.

Identification of Problem Gambling

ASAP supports training for all personnel working in facilities that fall within the responsibility of the New York State Gaming Commission. Specifically, we support continued training of casino workers on *Problem and Responsible Gambling* that helps to improve their ability to recognize an individual in crisis; talk to and provide support to the individual and/or their family during the crisis, and provide the individual with a resource list of problem gambling services and a locator such as the NYS Hopeline. Staff well-trained to identify problems before they escalate and to appropriately intervene and refer persons needing help is a necessary component of a successful problem gambling plan.

ASAP also recommends the use of community-based problem gambling prevention and treatment professionals on-site. These professionals, working in programs under the guidance of OASAS, would be able to provide training to staff, support and intervention with problem gamblers and their significant others, and follow-up services in a community agency. All casinos and gambling venues for which the New York State Gaming Commission has responsibility should have a relationship with local services providers and access to a statewide network of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services providers.

Self-Exclusion Policies

Casinos and other gambling venues should prominently display signage that informs patrons, that, if they want assistance in ensuring that they do not engage in problem gambling at that particular venue, staff members are available to assist. The self-exclusion policy should be implemented by staff who are trained to address the

patron's self-exclusion request in a sensitive manner that respects and supports the patron. The policy should require a referral to a problem gambling treatment program for all persons opting to exercise a self-exclusion process. The casino should include local problem gambling professionals in the development of their policy to increase the likelihood of successful referrals and connection to treatment services.

Treatment and Prevention

According to the 2013 National Survey of Problem Gambling Services, the state-funded New York State Helpline, administered by the Mental Health Association of New York City, received 1,224 calls for help specifically for problem gambling. At the time of the survey there were a total of 359 certified problem gambling treatment counselors in New York State as well as 36 credentialed prevention practitioners specializing in problem gambling. In 2013, also according to the survey, 390 gamblers and 24 significant others received state-funded outpatient counseling services for problem gambling.

New York State is ill-equipped to address the public health and social cost associated with the expansion of Gaming. Simply put, problem gambling public education, prevention, treatment, and recovery support services must be strengthened. While services are lacking to a significant degree, however, there is a strong infrastructure upon which the New York Gaming Commission, OASAS, and the gaming industry can build, namely the services continuum currently providing substance use disorders prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

ASAP recommends strengthening problem gambling services by:

- Including community-based prevention, treatment, and recovery services providers in the development and implementation of a comprehensive media campaign that highlights the availability and utility of problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. This statewide media campaign would utilize mainstream media, PSA's and printed materials in a culturally competent manner.
- Creating the capability to collect necessary data to identify individuals and communities at high risk and to use this data to develop county-specific problem gambling comprehensive plans.
- Expanding prevention programs so that they can provide direct education, targeted prevention, and outreach to women's centers, schools, colleges, senior centers and assisted living facilities, behavioral health providers, Veterans, drug courts, probation and parole, and other venues likely to be frequented by at-risk individuals.
- Increasing access to treatment by increasing the number of outpatient and inpatient providers of problem gambling treatment throughout the State of New York, ensuring that persons in every county in NYS have access to treatment. (Currently, New York State has treatment available at approximately 20 facilities statewide. This is not sufficient to provide services to 62 counties. Suffolk County, for example, has one treatment provider with one treatment counselor for the whole county.
- Ensuring that treatment is available upon demand. Immediate access to treatment through same day access must be our goal as well as improving treatment quality via use of best practices.
- Increasing training on problem and compulsive gambling to professionals across Behavioral Healthcare settings with emphasis on integrated care services.
- Increasing personnel to provide education, prevention, crisis services treatment and recovery services.

Areas of Priority

It is important that we target high risk individuals, families and communities. Persons who live in close proximity to a casino or other gambling venues are at higher risk for problem gambling. When someone lives within 50 miles of a casino, for example, the number of problem gamblers doubles. Identifying groups that are

at risk persons and targeting services toward those persons is crucial for the successful implementation of an effective continuum of problem gambling services. Of particular concern to the New York State Gaming Commission, OASAS, and the gaming industry should be:

- **Senior Citizens** - A University of Pennsylvania study by Addiction Researcher, David Oslin indicated that, of the “70% of seniors questioned who gambled in previous years, 1 in 10 had bet more than he or she could comfortably afford to lose”.
- **Adolescents** -A NYS OASAS survey of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 indicated 10% had participated in gambling activities and 10% were at risk for problem gambling.
- **College Students** - College students with a serious gambling problem are 6% or double that of the rate of the general population. (NY Council on Problem Gambling)
- **Women** – According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, among problem gamblers ages 45-64, women outnumber men. As “escape gamblers”, women are drawn to slot machines and recently senior women have been identified as the fastest growing group of problem gamblers.
- **Veterans** - “The Military estimates between 36,000 to 48,000 active duty service members have a gambling problem” (National Council on Problem Gambling). Treatment for the returning Veteran stays largely unaddressed and the addiction remains largely hidden.

Working with Existing Services System

ASAP strongly encourages the New York Gaming Commission and those that will be establishing casinos in New York State to work with ASAP to develop the problem gambling services continuum that we have recommended. Our large network of addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services providers and our regional coalitions of services providers provide you with an excellent partner that can help produce the services system you will need.

Thank you for this opportunity for input. We look forward to working with you.