

Survey Results cont...

One Key:
What is the one key thing you feel others need to remember when setting out to work with this population?

- Older adults are proud of who they are and at the same time need assistance in completing paperwork and activities
- Slow down, be patient and speak clearly
- Respect their lived experiences, ask their thoughts and preserve their dignity at all times
- Be non-judgmental, balance education with not telling them they CAN'T gamble
- Pay special attention to health and medications being taken
- This population can least afford to LOSE savings on gambling. This population is less likely to ask for help since it is NOT a problem they believe. Finally, they have very different opinions about what is and what is not gambling

Programs Surveyed

Connecticut
Kaitlin Foshay Brown, Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

Indiana
John Breslin and Peggy Payonk, Regional Mental Health Center, Gambling; Acute Addiction Services

Maryland
Carl Robertson, Prevention Consultant

New Jersey
Olubukunola Oyedele and Luis Del Orbe, NJ Council on Compulsive Gambling

Pennsylvania
Eileen Panzarella, Pathway to Recovery Counseling & Education Services

Brenda Shelton-Dunston and Nyamal Tutdeal, Black Woman's Health Alliance and DBHIDS

Susan Huffman, Venango County Drug and Alcohol Program

Jill Northey, Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug & Alcohol Commission

Beth Bruton, Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems

Frankie Sambuco, DACM Merakey D&A Case Management

“Be non-judgmental. Gambling is social and recreational for many older adults. Helping them to understand the risks associated with gambling without telling them how to spend their time and money, is really important to remember.”

- Kaitlin Foshay Brown

CONTACT:

For more information on survey results or to inquire about a specific program or strategy used, please contact:

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PRE-CONFERENCE PREVENTION LEARNING COMMUNITY—OLDER ADULTS HANDOUT

NCPG PREVENTION COMMITTEE - SPECIAL POPULATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE - OLDER ADULTS

Reaching the Older Adult

Older adults are one of the fastest-growing groups of gamblers. There are a number of reasons why older adults may be vulnerable to gambling problems, such as: gambling providing a distraction to escape the loss of a spouse or a medical concern, having financial problems they are seeking to overcome, and receiving the attention of casino staff possibly reducing the feelings of loneliness. Cognitive impairment may also prevent the recognition of a gambling problem in one’s self or friends and loved ones.

Older adults may not understand addiction and be reluctant to seek help. Signs of older adults having a gambling problem include loss of interest and participation in normal activities with friends and families, blocks of time unaccounted for, missing possessions or assets, and changes in attitude and personality. Gambling problems may also be evidenced by neglect of personal needs (food, utilities and medical), secrecy and avoidance in discussing gambling behaviors or finances.

Prevention professionals have had varying degrees of success in discussing gambling and problem gambling with the older adult population. Furthermore, it can be difficult to create effective and sustainable partnerships with community members, professionals and organizations who work with and care for older adults. Below are some tips from professionals who have experience and expertise in working with this special population.

Survey Results

Approach:
Please briefly describe how you got your “Foot in the Door.”

- Contact/Outreach to coordinators and/or program directors of Senior Centers; assisted living and senior housing authorities and Faith-based organizations
- Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up
- Focus the outreach efforts on combining or packaging the topic of gambling from the approach of quality of life, budgeting, finances or recreational activities that older adults accept rather than speaking about “Problem” gambling
- This population is eager for and receptive to presentations and programs that include give-a-ways!
- Utilize pre-existing relationships with groups and programs, as well as funders, case management services and District Attorneys who outreach to this population
- Collaborate with and utilize Regional Medical Centers for assessments and screenings, and find opportunities to train medical staff such as nurses on the topic of problem gambling
- Engage and collaborate with statewide prevention specialists for coordinated outreach and programming opportunities
- Attend senior expos, health fairs, senior wellness events and have a presence in faith-based and immigrant and refugee communities.



GOAL

The goal for the Special Populations Sub-committee was to survey professionals in the field with expertise in working with three specific populations who are at risk for problem gambling. The special populations selected for investigation in 2018-2019 were Co-Occurring Conditions (Substance Use Disorders and/or Mental Health Issues), African American and Older Adult Populations. This document reports specific strategies for engaging Older Adults.

“Be prepared: older adults are always honest and never hold back when providing honest feedback!”

- Jill Northey

“Preserve their dignity at all times!”

- Luis Del Orbe

Survey Results cont...

Successful Strategy:

Please describe the specific successful strategy you used to develop a working relationship with this population.

- Programs should include giveaways and take home items, engaging videos and activities such as trivia or “jeopardy”- type games
- Utilize the most current data and statistics on this population and its gambling behaviors; apply that data to the geographical number of older adults to help estimate in each community are susceptible to developing a gambling problem/addiction
- Work with special populations such as women of color (ex: Sister Circle Program) or immigrant /refugee populations; use translators if possible
- Conduct "chat" sessions that are heavy on respect and open discussion. Do not lecture, let the older adults drive discussion. Older adults have a life story to tell, being able to listen to their stories first establishes a foundation for talking about prevention second
- When discussing gambling, and other substance use and awareness, combine with other helpful and educational, yet non-stigmatized or biased topics like prescription storage and safety
- Use other known programs such as 'Gambling Away the Golden Years’
- Address prevention topics during medical or other health screenings

Facing Barriers:

What sort of challenges did you encounter in working with this population?

- Comprehension issues in regards to terminology and understanding of addiction; inability to identify problematic behavior
- Insufficient funding which does not allow for incentives, food and space; needing a partner that is proficient in language and cultural competence with limited English-speaking participants
- Perception by organizations and organizers that this is not a problem for older adults, indifference to the topic, not invested in programming or marketing the program
- Older adults do not believe that gambling is an issue for them and do not connect it to other health issues
- One and done programs are not sufficient enough for change and this is often all the time you are given
- Scheduling a presentation can be a challenge and often is cancelled or moved due to not being a priority
- Gambling perceived as a safe escape from their environments

“The older adult population is one of the best groups to work with because they have ‘few filters’! Tell your story first and you will open the door for them to tell their story; share videos, give them something to take with them. Be clear about the risks—but they will determine their level of risk with gambling. If you can get them to laugh with you, you will be invited back!”

- Carl Robertson

“The facts speak for themselves and also serve to get the attention of those who serve and fund this population. You need to make a case for prevention by pointing out how older adults and gambling is on the rise in the USA.”

- Carl Robertson

Survey Results cont...

Overcoming Challenges:

Please share any tips, angles or incentives you used to successfully overcome the barriers or challenges you encountered.

- Partner with local groups and use giveaways such as stickers, chip clips, etc.. and put your number or a helpline number on everything!
- Form community partnerships and engage those communities that are not your core constituents with an open mind and desire to learn from their leaders
- Use the successes in one location to open the doors and interests in other group locations
- Always have "something" for the older adults and be ready to respond in the presence of pessimism and sarcasm (often based on fear) with a smile, a positive spin and humor
- Go and have lunch with the older adults; hang out at their tables and listen and share your ups and downs. Let them see that you are more than just the 'gambling person'
- Customize a series of topics that are interesting to older adults so you are not just a one topic person
- Build strong and regular communications with the directors and program personnel - send them information for them to read and learn. Let them know that you are there for them and their families as well
- Be patient and consistent in making appointments, scheduling trainings and try to present to the entire group of directors, program managers and activity coordinators at one of their training sessions
- If you can, offer them CEUs or Certificates that help in their professional development goals
- Relate to older adults, share personal stories and experiences that lets them know that you are not above them. Show you understand!

Meeting Needs:

What specific needs of this population did you attempt to address with your efforts?

- Explaining the difference between games of skill and games of chance is a must
- More GA support groups seem to be needed
- Health outreach, gambling programs and community feedback indicates that the needs are being addressed
- Ongoing education with feedback and focus groups
- This is a vulnerable population that is open to abuse, mistreatment and fraud and requires constant attention to those needs

“The fact is that many seniors do not want to be told that gambling is ‘wrong’. You need to focus on education and how gambling can be a safe activity for seniors.”

- Kaitlin Foshay Brown

“Use self-help groups (for seniors) to support them in their recovery process and have peers who know the dangers and can be supports for those who desire to control their gambling.”

- John Breslin and
- Peggy Payonk