



Arizona Department of Gaming
Division of Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling Services Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2023

Sponsored by

ADG | Arizona Department of Gaming
Problem Gambling



Project importance

At the time this report was written in 2023, the State of Arizona had a thriving legalized and regulated gambling industry with a state lottery, 25 Class III casinos operated by federally recognized Arizona Tribes, and sports betting opened for business just over two years earlier in September 2021. Today, 25 licensed sportsbooks operate in Arizona including Internet and app-based sportsbooks allowing for event wagering and fantasy sports betting. Arizona's legalized gambling industry is an important contributor to the state economy by creating thousands of jobs and millions of dollars transferred to tribal, state, and local governments for important public services.

Perhaps the most significant downside to Arizona's expansive legalized gambling environment is the impact of problem gambling on individuals, families, and communities. Efforts to reduce the negative societal impacts of gambling and problem gambling in Arizona are taking place, notably within the Arizona Department of Gaming (ADG). The ADG is the state agency charged with regulating tribal gaming, event wagering & fantasy sports contests, racing and pari-mutuel/simulcast wagering, and unarmed combat sports. ADG also provides and supports prevention, education, and treatment programs for people and families affected by problem gambling through its Division of Problem Gambling (DPG).

In 2023, the ADG, Division of Problem Gambling, commissioned the present study to evaluate the effectiveness of its problem gambling programs, including problem gambling public awareness and prevention, gambling treatment, and voluntary casino and event wagering self-exclusion services. The evaluation products included:

- A summary report entitled; *"Arizona Department of Gaming, Division of Problem Gambling, Problem Gambling Services Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report"*
- A general population survey report entitled; *"Gambling Behaviors, Attitudes, and Experiences among Arizona Adult Residents"* that has a companion *"Probability Based Panel Survey Technical Report"*
- Twenty component reports, found in a document entitled, *"Arizona Department of Gaming, Division of Problem Gambling, Program Evaluation: Supplemental Report"*.

The ultimate objective of the project was system development by providing decision-makers, including ADG Division of Problem Gambling staff, with information to engage in meaningful program improvements. A well-functioning and effective system to reduce gambling-related harm is vital for the economic and public health of Arizona.

Project Objectives

The evaluation project's direction was taken from language from Appendix M of the 2021 Amended Tribal-State Gaming Compact, which stated:

"To ensure that self-exclusion and problem gambling programs are applied effectively within the State of Arizona, the Division of Problem Gambling shall have completed a problem gambling/self-exclusion program evaluation with the assistance of an independent third party. The purpose of the evaluation will be to gain feedback on how the program is administered and how it can be improved. The results of the evaluation shall be shared with the Tribe and used to develop and further best practices."

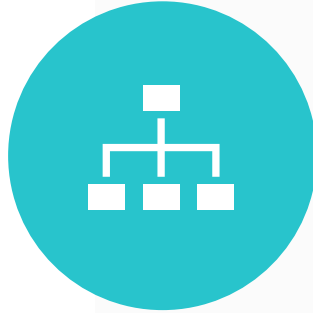
Summary problem gambling system observations



NEED FOR DPG SERVICES

Evidence discovered through the evaluation process suggested the need for problem gambling service enhancements is critical.

- Calls for help to the problem gambling helpline surged nearly 300% in 2022 compared to the prior year and continued to increase in 2023.
- The survey of Arizona's general population found almost 1 in 5 adults reported negative impacts related to their gambling behaviors over the past year and an estimated 3.8% to 4% of Arizona residents might be living with Gambling Disorder.



DPG ADMINISTRATION

Overall, the DPG's administration of problem gambling public awareness, helpline, treatment, and self-exclusion services are commendable.

- The evaluation revealed several program strengths that were accomplished through DPG administrative and staff efforts.
- DPG appears to be supported by current ADG leadership, the Governor, Tribal leaders, providers, and the public.



GREATEST NEED

The greatest single change that has the potential to improve problem gambling services in Arizona is significantly increasing the DPG budget.

- Arizona's per-capita investment in problem gambling services is below the national average for states with dedicated problem gambling services funding.
- Although the DPG budget has increased in recent years, the FY2023 would need to double for Arizona to be among the top 15% of states investing in problem gambling services.



FUTURE EFFORTS

The current evaluation efforts could best be considered a vital launching point for a new round of efforts to reduce gambling-related harm in Arizona.

- The evaluation reveals several specific program enhancements that should be considered for the continued improvement of DPG services.
- The following section highlights actions that could be taken in the near and far term to improve services.

Priority system enhancements

The reports that make up the components of the current DPG program evaluation contain over 100 potential initiatives that could be considered when engaging in program improvement efforts. Some of the suggested program enhancements would require considerable time and resources to be enacted. The below list of potential priority initiatives could take place within the next two years and be initiated with unencumbered FY2024 program funds:

- Utilize the information contained within the present evaluation to develop a strategic plan, with an accompanying work plan, to systematically engage in program improvements.
- System and program improvements require staff time. Increasing DPG staff time to invest in program enhancement can be accomplished through one or more of the following:
 - Hire additional DPG staff and/or program consultants. Consider the development of a new position whose focus is on furthering tribal relationships, programs, and services.
 - Free up staff administrative time by reducing the provision of direct services. For example, look for opportunities to discontinue or outsource select outreach activities and tasks related to training activities.
- Direct efforts to the self-exclusion program to improve efficiencies, therapeutic impact, and ease of consumer use.
 - Utilize the experience of other U.S. gaming regulators that have recently updated their self-exclusion services. Solutions to DPG self-exclusion program challenges have been implemented in other states and administrators of identified model self-exclusion programs are willing to share their knowledge.
- The DPG gambling treatment system is at high risk of being unable to meet future community needs and should be considered a priority area to address.
 - Implement initiatives to increase the gambling treatment workforce. For example, develop incentives for current DPG treatment providers to bring on interns.
 - Initiate the development of peer support services to supplement treatment services and provide additional system capacity for aiding problem gambling recovery.

Keys for continued success

The primary objective of the DPG evaluation was “to develop and further best practices”. This objective corresponds to the DPG Mission and Vision to “provide and support effective problem gambling prevention, treatment, and education programs throughout Arizona” through “a sustainable continuum of services that reduces to a minimum level the impact of problem gambling in Arizona”.

This evaluation project, as documented within the project reports, provided several areas and tactics where program enhancements can be made to help the DPG remain true to its mission and follow its vision. However, identifying program areas for improvement and listing possible solutions is only the first part of an improvement process and perhaps the easiest phase of that process.

The challenge ahead is to successfully implement positive changes and engage in an ongoing process of successful continuous improvements. This can be achieved through attention to the elements depicted in the figure to the right. Each of these keys for successful continuous improvement requires and deserves time and consideration if the DPG is expected to successfully implement program enhancements as suggested within this project’s evaluation reports.





The present evaluation was conducted by Problem Gambling Solutions, Inc. through contract with the Arizona Department of Gaming, Division of Problem Gambling.

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