

**Exploration of Cultural Perceptions, Attitudes and Beliefs
Regarding Gambling and Problem Gambling in the
Punjabi Speaking Community
in the Greater Toronto Area**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project is a collaboration between COSTI Immigrant Services and Punjabi Community Health Centre (PCHC).

Purpose of the Research

Given limited research conducted within ethnocultural communities targeted by this project, the purpose of this research was to explore perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding gambling and problem gambling. The research was also designed to explore how problem gambling may be prevented and reduced, and to assess how approaches, materials and techniques to address the issue of problem gambling in this community can be developed. The Punjabi speaking community is one of seven communities involved and was selected given its size in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Participatory Action Research

In order for the results of this project to be meaningful and useful to the communities involved, a Participatory Action Research approach was used. This means community stakeholders were involved from the onset to the completion of the project.

Data Collection Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data. Focus groups were conducted with service providers and community members as well as conducting individual interviews with service providers who were not able to attend focus groups.

Data Analysis and Results

Qualitative

- There seems to be stigma around gambling activity even though activities such as card playing are reported to be common in the community. All focus groups with the exception of youth indicated that gambling is not considered an acceptable activity.
- Both the adult and seniors' focus groups indicated that those employed as taxi drivers were most at risk of developing a problem with gambling. Also, men were identified as more frequent gamblers in the community. Service

providers indicated a concern for youth, male adults, and taxi drivers. Youth reported that given the increasing popularity of gambling as a form of recreation and the importance of money and status among youth, gambling could potentially become problematic.

- When asked to list priority issues in the community, a number of issues other than problem gambling were listed, with alcohol addiction being one of the top issues identified by each focus group.
- Barriers to service programming, as reported by focus group participants, includes the stigma associated with seeking help for a gambling problem; confidentiality and fear of being recognized at ethnospecific agencies; trust and communication with mainstream service providers. Seeking help and admitting to a problem may be seen as a “moral” flaw. All focus groups indicated a preference for ethnospecific agencies with the exception of youth who explained they generally would not go to a South Asian agency for a problem that would shame the family.
- Majority prefers to use community services to address a gambling problem.

Quantitative

- 36% of the survey respondents reported that gambling is allowed at home.
- The survey indicated that male youth (64%) and adult males (59%) were considered to be most at risk.
- Majority prefers to use community services.
- There are no services for problem gamblers available in the community.
- The survey respondents (53%) considered problem gambling as one of the top ten issues in the community.
- Most effective methods and venues for public education were identified to be local TV (94%), local radio (91%), local newspaper (85%), workshop/seminar (46%), cultural events (36%), and religious institutions (31%).

Conclusion

This research project brought together a number of stakeholders and provided an opportunity for the community to begin to address the issue of problem gambling, while also providing a base for future research, prevention and treatment.