

# **Exploration of Cultural Perceptions, Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding Gambling and Problem Gambling in the**

## **Hispanic Community in the Greater Toronto Area**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**This research project represents a collaboration between the following three COSTI Immigrant Services' Centres: Family and Mental Health Services, Corvetti Education Centre and North York Centre.**

#### **Purpose of the Research**

Given limited research in the area of problem gambling within the 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 ethnocultural communities can be developed. The Hispanic community is one of seven communities involved in this research project, selected based on 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 approach was used. This means that community stakeholders were actively involved in informing the research process 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 Results**

- Gambling is seen as a common and popular activity with no particular cultural and religious taboo. Gambling seems to be perceived as a form of recreation. Seniors reported that this is one of the few recreational opportunities available to them.

- In most focus groups the difference between gambling and problem gambling was reported to be based on the amount of money wagered. Problem gambling is not as visible as substance abuse so its existence is not as recognized. In all focus groups a variety of issues, other than gambling, were listed as top ten priority issues in the community.
- Some difference in games and acceptability of gambling for men and women was reported in a couple of the focus groups. Perception is that men partake in gambling more than women.
- Participants in all focus groups reported some unwillingness to seek outside help for issues such as problem gambling due to the stigma surrounding the issue. Service providers reported that usually family members seek help before the individual with the problem.
- Some ways of providing public education listed by the groups are: community media, local restaurants, ads in the Hispanic telephone directory, social clubs, churches, workshops and pamphlets.
- All focus groups mentioned seniors as a subgroup within the community to target for public education. Youth and adult males were also mentioned.
- Barriers to programming, as reported by focus group participants, might include attitude towards seeking outside help and shame and stigma, language and cultural barriers, lack of trust of service agencies.

### **Quantitative Results**

- Common recreational activities and gambling activities include sports betting, football, card games betting, billiard betting, bingo, board games, Quino, horseshoe betting, bowling betting, and POGS betting.
- Male youth (46%) and adult males (60%) were identified to be more at risk.
- People prefer to seek help from religious leaders, elders and relatives.
- 60% of the participants prefer to use ethno-specific agencies for resources.
- There are no services available for problem gamblers within the Hispanic community.
- 50% of the participants see problem gambling as one of the top ten issues of the community.
- The most effective methods and venues for public education were identified as, community TV (71%), workshops/seminars (58%), community newspapers (56%), community radio (52%), ethnocultural organizations (49%), posters (43%), cultural events (40%), and community agencies/centres (33%).

### **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.