

WSCPG Newsbrief

December

2000

INSURANCE INDUSTRY TESTIFIES: “PROBLEM GAMBLING COVERAGE AVAILABLE BUT LITTLE USED”

On October 3, during special legislative hearing on Problem Gambling in Spokane, insurance industry representatives testified that Problem Gambling was covered under policies offering mental health coverage. The industry officials said there were few such claims.

Prior to the testimony for the insurance industry, Jennifer McCausland, from the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, also testified that Problem Gambling coverage was available.

The availability of coverage came as a surprise to many in the audience. In the past, treatment providers have found coverage limited. However, testimony indicated that such claims might be incorrectly filed.

In light of this testimony, the WSCPG hopes that providers will contact insurance companies to obtain filing information.

MORE ON THE HEARING

The October 3 hearing was the second legislative hearing on Problem Gambling. The hearing, chaired by Senator Margarita Prentice, was designed to provide an update to last year’s hearing in Yakima.

Connie Jones, Director of Responsible Gaming for Anchor Gambling and a Board Member of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) provided an overview of Responsible Gaming efforts in other states. Ms. Jones was followed by a panel consisting of representatives of the WSCPG and of the Industry Working Group. This panel outlined the efforts being undertaken by the Gambling Industry in Washington State. The panel also discussed the need for more action, especially the expansion of treatment availability.

Mike Forness, the Manager of Behavioral Medicine at Deaconess Medical Center followed. Mr. Forness provided an overview of the Problem Gambling treatment program available at Deaconess.

Prior to adjourning, Senator Prentice said that her legislative committee would continue to examine the issue of Problem Gambling.

CONTRIBUTORS CORNER

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The financial support of these firms underscore their commitment to responsible gambling.

14TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD IN PHILADELPHIA

The 14th Annual Conference on Problem Gambling was held in Philadelphia, October 5-7. Nearly 400 treatment professionals, researchers, industry experts, members of the recovering community, and other interested individuals attended. Presenters discussed the latest research and the newest treatment methods.

TRIBAL TRAINING WORKSHOP HELD

The WSCPG joined with the Tulalip Tribe to host a special three-day training workshop for professional treatment providers working in Tribal cultures. The workshops, which were attended by over 30 professionals was held September 12-14 in Marysville.

These workshops are part of the WSCPG's continuing efforts to expand its service to the many ethnic populations that make up the diversity of the Pacific Northwest. While general treatment issues are similar, each cultural group has special needs. Working with Native American Tribal professionals, the WSCPG provided training focused on the cultural needs found in Native American cultures.

These workshops were particularly meaningful. Each day opened with a prayer led by a Native American elder. A special banquet was held one evening, featuring a traditional *Tulalip drummers provide foundation for workshop*. drumming ceremony.

Special thanks goes out to the many people who helped organize this special training, including Lee Topash, Rae Anne Cleveland, Gary Ramey, Della Hill, and many others. Also, the Tulalip Tribe and the Tulalip Casino deserve special thanks for their support.

WSCPG JOINS DEACONESS MEDICAL CENTER FOR CONFERENCE

The WSCPG joined Deaconess Medical Center in Spokane to host a Conference on Problem Gambling. The WSCPG provided two days of training as part of the Conference. Over fifty professionals attended.

Deaconess has inaugurated a treatment program for Problem Gambling as part of its behavioral health services. Thanks to the support of several Spokane gambling establishments, residents of Spokane County can receive treatment at no or low cost.

During a special luncheon, three presenters provided different perspectives on Problem Gambling. Ellen, spouse of a Problem Gambler, provided an emotional description of the problems faced by the family of a Problem Gambler. Representative Alex Wood provided an overview of legislative efforts. H.T. Higgins, owner of a Spokane mini-casino providing financial support for the Deaconess treatment program, outlined the efforts of the gambling industry. Mr. Higgins pointed out that there was money available to support treatment programs, but that there was a lack of political will to use it.

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO THE MUCKLESHOOT TRIBE

Over the years it has been gratifying to see more and more members of the Gambling Industry support the work of the WSCPG. This has been particularly true of the Native American Tribes that have developed casinos. Many of these Tribes, with a keen awareness of the devastation of addictions, have been key supporters of the Council's work. Recently, one Tribe, the Muckleshoots, has stood out for special recognition.

The WSCPG presented the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe with a special award during their Tribal Council meeting on September 1. The award recognized the Muckleshoot Tribe's substantial contribution to the creation of the Problem Gambling Industry Awareness Video. While many members of the Gambling Industry contributed to this effort, the Muckleshoot Tribe's contribution of \$20,000 proved crucial to the success of this effort. The Award reads:

"On behalf of the Washington State Council on Problem Gambling, we recognize the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe their foresight, commitment, and outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of problem gambling and to the development of policies to address this addiction. On behalf of the Council as well as problem gamblers and their families, we thank you."

In November, the Muckleshoot Tribe stepped forward again, pledging over \$20,000 to the WSCPG for 2000 and over \$38,000 in 2001. This pledge makes the Muckleshoot Tribe one of the leaders in Responsible Gaming once again.

SPECIAL PSA

In September, the Gambling Industry joined the WSCPG to produce a special Public Service Announcement (PSA) on Problem Gambling for Gambling Awareness Week. This public awareness effort utilized print and radio media. The print ad appeared in newspapers throughout the State. Audio PSAs were provided to every radio station in the State.

Supporters of the effort included: The Washington State Lottery, Northwest Racing Association (Emerald Downs Racetrack), The Swinomish Casino, The Recreational Gaming Association, P.J. Pockets Casino, Royal Casino, and the Washington Charitable and Civic Gaming Association.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- **WSCPG TO HOST NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The WSCPG will host the *15th Annual Conference on Problem Gambling* June 21-23, 2001 in SeaTac. This annual event highlights the latest achievements in research and treatment of Problem Gambling. The Conference also provides updates on the latest Responsible Gaming policies.

The June Conference will showcase our efforts in Washington State to work collaboratively with all factions involved with the issue, the gambling industry, the treatment community, and the recovering community. This Conference also promises to have an even greater focus on Responsible Gaming, including a special instructional track for the Gambling Industry.

- **WSCPG WILL HOLD 3rd ANNUAL YOUTH CONFERENCE**

The WSCPG will hold its 3rd Annual Youth Conference on Friday, March 9, 2001 in Seattle. The conference brochures will be mailed in January.