

January 4, 2005

AADAC opens residential treatment program for problem gamblers

Grande Prairie... The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission is opening a residential treatment program for problem gamblers at the AADAC Northern Addictions Centre (NAC) in Grande Prairie.

Starting January 3, 2005, the *NAC Gambling Treatment Program* has four spaces available for adults experiencing problems as a result of their gambling activities. Clients will live at the Northern Addictions Centre during the two-week program. Living in a treatment centre, away from their normal environment, helps clients recognize the reasons for their addictive behaviour, draw upon their personal strengths and make positive changes in their lives.

"The new program will help fill a need for problem gambling residential treatment services in northern Alberta," says Kathy Landry, manager of the AADAC Northern Addictions Centre. "It will help people with gambling problems - regardless of the type of gambling activity they are engaged in."

The program will focus specifically on gambling behaviours. The NAC also offers gambling stabilization as part of the program, for clients who require immediate assistance with a severe gambling problem.

The majority of adult Albertans gamble responsibly as a social activity and do not develop problems. About five per cent of adult Albertans experience moderate to severe problems as a result of their gambling.

AADAC and its funded agencies provide a range of problem gambling treatment services in 49 Alberta communities including outpatient counselling, residential treatment, referral to self-help groups such as Gambler's Anonymous, and gambling stabilization for individuals experiencing acute physical or emotional problems. Assistance for problem gamblers is also provided through the 24-hour, toll-free AADAC Help Line (1-866-332-2322).

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AADAC - Making a **difference** in people's lives

Background

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Problem Gambling in Alberta

Problem gamblers come from all segments of the population, live in all regions of the province and include men and women of all ages and all socio-economic backgrounds. In addition to gambling for entertainment or fun, people with gambling problems will often gamble alone, chase losses and gamble to escape from problems.

Symptoms of severe gambling problems include emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, difficulty thinking or problem solving, and thoughts of suicide. Physical distress related to problem gambling includes sleep and eating disturbances and an inability to refrain from gambling. Other difficulties include health problems, problems with family and social relationships, and employment or school-related troubles as a result of gambling activities.

Statistics:

- In 2002, 82% of adult Albertans (18 years and older) had gambled in the past year and 5.2% of adult Albertans experienced moderate to severe problems as a result of their gambling.
- In 2003/04, 7.5% of all AADAC clients reported gambling as a reason for treatment. Gambling only was the reason for treatment for 4.3% of clients and gambling in combination with alcohol and/or other drugs was the reason for treatment for 3.2% of clients.
- In 2002/03, 7.2% of all AADAC clients reported gambling as a reason for treatment. Gambling only was the reason for treatment for 4.3% of clients and gambling in combination with alcohol and/or other drugs was the reason for treatment for 2.9% of clients.

Problem Gambling Services

AADAC's problem gambling services include community prevention and education initiatives, outpatient counselling for individuals and families at AADAC offices across Alberta, crisis stabilization, and residential treatment. In addition to the *NAC Gambling Treatment Program*, residential treatment programs for problem gamblers are available from AADAC funded agencies including the Aventa facility in Calgary, Poundmaker's Lodge in St. Albert, the South Country Treatment Centre in Lethbridge, and the Walter A. "Slim" Thorpe Recovery Centre in Lloydminster.

AADAC Northern Addictions Centre (NAC)

The AADAC Northern Addictions Centre opened in 1991. The 7,000 square metre facility plays a leading role in AADAC's province-wide network of addiction-related services. In addition to outpatient counselling through AADAC's Grande Prairie Area Office, the centre includes a 20-bed detoxification unit to provide a safe and supportive environment for withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs, and a 43-bed residential treatment facility to help clients and family members overcome problems associated with alcohol, other drug abuse and problem gambling.

Along with the new *NAC Gambling Treatment Program*, residential treatment services at the NAC include a 20-day addictions treatment program as well as a 30-day alcohol and drug program and a 50-day cocaine program offered through the AADAC Business and Industry Clinic.

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