



**Ministry of Public Safety
and Solicitor General**
Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch

PROBLEM GAMBLING PROGRAM COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Guiding Philosophy

The Problem Gambling Program (the Program) recognizes that quality assurance, accountability and openness are fundamental to the success and safety of the Program and the clients accessing the Program. We are committed to the promotion of best practices and strive at all times for quality improvement.

It is our commitment to our clients to listen and respond to client concerns in a fair, open, timely, client-centered manner. The Program will:

- Provide all clients with quality service;
- Review service provider actions to ensure best practice standards are upheld; and
- Conduct service evaluations as necessary.

Wherever possible, the Program seeks to prevent complaints by hiring qualified professionals, bound by codes of ethics and standards of practice, as well as the contracts they sign with the Program. The Program practices open and direct communication with clients and community members.

All professionals contracted by the Program are required to provide counselling services at the same standard as any other counsellor providing similar services in a commercial setting. Any individuals working with them must also meet those same standards and must be appropriately instructed and supervised in their work. In addition, professionals that provide counselling services for the Program are required to participate in service evaluations that we may perform from time to time and to participate in this complaint resolution process.

1. Bringing Forward a Concern

A complaint is an expression of concern or dissatisfaction about the conduct or actions of a service provider and may relate to allegations of professional misconduct or incompetence. This may include a perceived failure to comply with standards of practice, or a potential disorder affecting the fitness of a service provider to practice in the Problem Gambling Program. A concern may be expressed by clients (anyone who is receiving services or believes themselves eligible to receive services) or an advocate on behalf of clients. Whether a complaint is laid by the client or by another party on behalf of a client (the complainant), the interests, expressed wishes and needs of the affected complainant(s) are factors that guide the complaints process.

A complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the Manager, Problem Gambling Program, Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. A complaint should include detailed information, providing the name of the service provider, a description of what happened, why the complainant is concerned, and how the complainant would want the complaint resolved. It is important to include the date(s), time(s) and place(s) of the event(s), if possible. All complaints received by the Manager will be kept confidential, unless deemed appropriate to take the complaint through this Complaints Process.

2. The Complaints Process

Once the Manager of the Problem Gambling Program has received the written complaint, on permission of the complainant, it will be taken to the Complaints Committee for review. The Manager will also inform the service provider about the complaint and will ask the complainant to provide a copy directly to the service provider. Where a complainant is not comfortable doing so, permission will be requested for the Manager to forward that complaint to the service provider.

Where complaints can be resolved informally (between the service provider and the complainant) every effort will be made to do so. This may include a facilitated session with another service provider, the Manager, or whomever the Manager deems appropriate. When complaints cannot be resolved informally, they will be resolved at the formal level through an Independent Review.

3. The Independent Review Process

Once a formal complaint is passed along to the Complaints Committee, the Committee will review the complaint and where the complaint is not resolved informally, commence an independent review. An independent reviewer will be assigned to the case. The reviewer must not have a direct line of responsibility over the area, person, or subject of the complaint.

The role of the reviewer is to collect all information relevant to the complaint from anyone concerned. All involved parties will be given a full opportunity to provide any evidence and response he/she wishes. The Committee will assist by identifying and generating questions requiring clarification to focus the investigation, which includes interviews with the complainant(s), the service provider, and any other persons the Committee deems may shed light on the issues at hand. While every effort will be made to uphold client confidentiality, full confidentiality may not be guaranteed due to the necessity of some information sharing throughout the review process. Where this is necessary, a release of information will be requested from the complainant(s) and/or service provider.

The reviewer is responsible for ensuring that complaints are fully investigated and that the principles of fairness and natural justice have been upheld. When reviewing the complaint, the reviewer balances a variety of factors to consider in reviewing a complaint, including among others: the views of involved parties; the principles of fairness and natural justice; and applicable codes of ethics, contractual agreements, and available resources. During a review, all communications between the complainant and service provider must be made through the reviewer.

Once these interviews have been completed, the reviewer will provide a written report to the Committee, outlining:

- The facts of the complaint;
- A summary of the evidence gathered from the investigation; and
- Suggest recommendations to the Committee.

The Committee will analyze and thoroughly consider the information in order to arrive at a final decision.

4. Decisions

On analyzing the information provided, the Committee may decide to:

- Dismiss the matter with a written explanation to the client;
- Recommend terms and conditions for the continuation of the contract with the service provider (these may include clinical consultation, supervision, rules regarding group facilitation, etc.);
- Recommend withdrawal of the contract from the service provider; or
- Recommend that a service evaluation be done.

Issued by:

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