

MADERA COUNTY ALCOHOL & DRUG ADVISORY BOARD  
PROBLEM GAMBLING COMMITTEE

**DRAFT POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING PROBLEM GAMBLING  
PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND INTERVENTION  
For Consideration at a Special Meeting on 3/27/08  
of the Madera County Alcohol & Drug Advisory Board**

It is generally understood that increased access to casino gambling in Madera County will provide a substantial boost to the local economy, including the addition of new jobs and increased tourism as well as significant contributions from gaming revenues to support county and city services.

What is less understood or acknowledged is the reality that increased availability of gambling venues in a community is also likely to result in substantial increase in problem gambling and its attendant effects; loss of control, financial collapse, family disruption, co-occurring substance abuse, emotional and/or physical problems and the like. The personal and family impacts of problem gambling can be debilitating; at the same time the wider community may also be impacted in terms of increased costs for welfare, child protection, physical health care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment and law enforcement.

The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs established an Office of Problem Gambling in 2005 and it is charged with developing a state wide strategic plan to address these impacts. Their initial recommendations call for a public health approach that “encompasses a broad range of activities.” These include identifying key indicator data to monitor impacts statewide; strategic planning among state agencies, the gambling industry and local stakeholders where casinos reside; increasing the capacity of the workforce to identify, refer and treat problem gamblers; and providing education, prevention, intervention and treatment services.

The Madera County Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board supports these efforts, particularly those related to education and prevention of problem gambling as they stand to impact the behavior and attitudes of the larger population most effectively. Formal treatment must also be available for those whose gambling is truly pathological in nature. There is currently no funding from the state available at the local level for these initiatives. This has and will continue to hamper efforts locally to mitigate the effects of problem gambling.

As an advisory board we urge the local gambling industry to join in these efforts through their own initiatives, such as hotlines, voluntary exclusion programs and the adoption of “responsible gambling” marketing and advertising practices. We also encourage the local gambling industry to join in an active partnership with county health, mental health and substance abuse providers to financially support needed efforts to improve the availability of education, prevention and treatment services to address and mitigate the impact of problem gambling in the local community. It is the opinion of the Madera County Alcohol & Drug Advisory Board that the currently proposed financial support is inadequate to mitigate the aforementioned impact of problem gambling in our community.