

research snapshot

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Process evaluation of two community-action based gambling harm minimization programs

What this research is about

In New Zealand, the *Gambling Act 2003* mandated a public health strategy for preventing and minimizing gambling harms. 'Aware Communities' and 'Supportive Communities' are two public health programs aiming to achieve the Act's goals. 'Aware Communities' aimed to build community awareness of gambling harms through public debate, media activities, community-led campaigns and education. 'Supportive Communities' aimed to help communities respond to and recover from gambling harms through health promotion, education, and awareness raising.

Unlike other gambling harm minimization programs, these two programs were community-action based. They required community partnerships and community involvement in program planning and delivery. Community-action based approaches are new in the field of gambling. Only one evaluation of a similar program existed. The current study evaluated the process of delivering these two programs. It also identified program strengths and challenges that could be used to inform future programs.

What the researchers did

The researchers evaluated 'Aware Communities' and 'Supportive Communities' using a logic model framework. This allowed a review of the programs' inputs, outputs, outcomes, strengths and challenges.

The researchers reviewed over 100 six-monthly progress reports submitted by all program implementers between July 2010 and June 2013. These reports detailed activities delivered, outcomes, and some findings from informal evaluations. The researchers also gained information from 35 program

What you need to know

The current study evaluated the process of delivering two community-action based gambling harm minimization programs in New Zealand. 'Aware Communities' and 'Supportive Communities' appeared to be sustainable programs. The community-action based approach of these programs helped to reach different ethnic groups and those at risk of gambling harms. There was also some evidence that the programs could enhance social sustainability. The researchers identified some factors for success in the planning and delivery of gambling harm minimization programs.

staff who completed an online survey. In addition, eight staff participated in a focus group interview.

The researchers analyzed the reports and staff feedback for common themes. Through these themes, they identified program features that could strengthen social sustainability and program sustainability. Social sustainability refers to a society's ability to support social, cultural, health, emotional and safety needs of its members. Program sustainability refers to a program's ability to continue its activities after initial funding is up.

What the researchers found

The evaluation found that involving stakeholder groups (e.g., community groups, health and social services) in program planning and delivery enhanced program sustainability. In the 'Aware Communities' and 'Supportive Communities' programs, this was achieved by community members having lead roles in

ongoing project work; training community members to continue with program delivery after initial funding is up; developing reusable resources that are easily reached by the community; and planning for ongoing delivery of programs through partnerships.

Factors for program success included staff having detailed knowledge about the communities they are working with; and using communication channels that are culturally appropriate (e.g., ethnic language radio stations, churches). Challenges included costs and substantial time required for building relationship. Also, staff had to work to fit in with community members' time availability.

Program staff did not report specific program activities that could lead to social sustainability. However, the researchers noted some features that might enhance social sustainability. These included community participation; listening to community voices and opinions; community feelings of empowerment and ownership of the programs; trustful relationships; and recognizing and accepting cultural values and diversity.

How you can use this research

The evaluation shows that policy-makers, program funders, and program staff should involve the community in the planning and delivery of gambling harm minimization programs. This could help ensure that programs are sustainable beyond initial funding. Program staff should ensure their messages are culturally appropriate and effective to reach different ethnic groups. Future programs should include social sustainability as an aim of the programs.

About the researchers

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