The development of a survey instrument for the problem gambling workforce


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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The overarching purpose of this survey is to facilitate understanding of the training-related needs of the U.S. problem gambling treatment workforce for empirically supported assessment and treatment strategies. The survey asks respondents about attitudes, work history, educational history, training needs, and work experience as substance abuse professionals (i.e., clinical supervisors, executive directors, and line staff).

SIGNIFICANCE

1. The problem gambling workforce is relatively new and unknown, and only a few states have adopted standards for problem gambling treatment workforce training and credentialing as described by the North West Frontier, Mountain West, and Prairielands ATTCs, as well as Instruments developed by Forman and colleagues (2001, 2002), and McCarthey and colleagues (2007). These well-established workforce development survey instruments were integrated and accommodated for assumed problem gambling workforce issues. A team of national and international experts reviewed the draft of this instrument and made a number of corrections and suggestions which were then incorporated into the instrument.

2. Scientists need to relate better to the workforce to improve and broaden the scope of their research efforts.

3. The workforce is likely to be receptive to incorporating research into practice, since gambling research and treatment comprise a relatively new field; and methodologically sound research on the diagnosis and treatment of pathological gambling has only recently become the norm.

4. A deeper understanding of the nature and needs of the workforce must precede any successful effort to transfer research findings to practitioners.

METHODS

Development of survey questionnaire

The research team developed a survey questionnaire for use with problem gambling professionals on questionnaire with substance abuse treatment professionals, such as those developed by the North West Frontier, Mountain West, and Prairielands ATTCs, as well as Instruments developed by Forman and colleagues (2001, 2002), and McCarthey and colleagues (2007). These well-established workforce development survey instruments were integrated and accommodated for assumed problem gambling workforce issues. A team of national and international experts reviewed the draft of this instrument and made a number of corrections and suggestions which were then incorporated into the instrument.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in Missouri. Twenty-five problem gambling professionals were solicited for participation in this pilot study. Response rate was 45%. After the participants signed the information summary and consent document, they completed a draft of the structured problem gambling workforce survey and also completed open-ended questions about the experience of completing the survey, completeness of the survey questions, questions about possible gaps and limitations of the questionnaire and requests for suggestions. Each participant received a $5 gift certificate for participating in the pilot study. After a second revision, our expert panels were again asked to provide feedback on the revised questionnaire used in the pilot study.

Based on the results of the pilot study the revised instrument again, reducing its length in hopes that doing so would improve the completion rate. Accordingly, the revised survey instrument asks for demographic information, and about experience within the field, certification, training received, openness to adopting evidence-based practices, agency policies, beliefs about problem gambling and problem gambling treatment, and instruments used in assessment of clients.

Second step in the development of the survey instrument

The revised survey instrument will be used to conduct a national survey of the problem gambling treatment workforce in order to assess the training, education, and certification needs of this workforce. Problem gambling treatment providers have been collected by the National Problem Gambling Initiative. The survey design and data collection are being conducted by Noldus Information Tech. The survey design and data collection are being conducted by Noldus Information Tech. The survey design and data collection are being conducted by Noldus Information Tech.

Future development

The project is in the midst of collecting data across the country. Once data collection is complete, an expert panel consisting of ATTC directors and internationally recognized gambling researchers will convene in order to develop a set of recommendations that will enable the development of an evidence-based teaching education curriculum based upon our study findings.

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SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Demographic information is gathered in order to describe the gambling workforce. These questions include age, gender, education, years in the field, and place of current employment.

2. Work Experience information is gathered in order to establish the experience level of the survey participants. These questions include where counseling career began, types of counseling done prior to entering gambling treatment field, years of experience working with problem gamblers, and current problem gambling caseload.

3. Training Received information is gathered in order to determine what kind of training would be most beneficial to the gambling workforce. These questions include disease status of pathological gambling, the role of compliance in treatment continuation, techniques which should be used more widely, efficacy of various treatments, use of medications in treatment, and acceptability of controlled or reduced gambling as a treatment goal.

4. Treatment Options are assessed in order to determine what problems are most prevalent in the gambling treatment workforce. These questions include disease status of pathological gambling, the role of compliance in treatment continuation, techniques which should be used more widely, efficacy of various treatments, use of medications in treatment, and acceptability of controlled or reduced gambling as a treatment goal.

5. Questions to Use of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) information is gathered in order to better understand how to disseminate EBPs to the gambling workforce. These questions include agency substandard to peer-reviewed journals, agency use of research findings to determine treatment/prevention practices or policies, sources used to address treatment questions, and ability to understand and apply research reported in peer-reviewed journals.