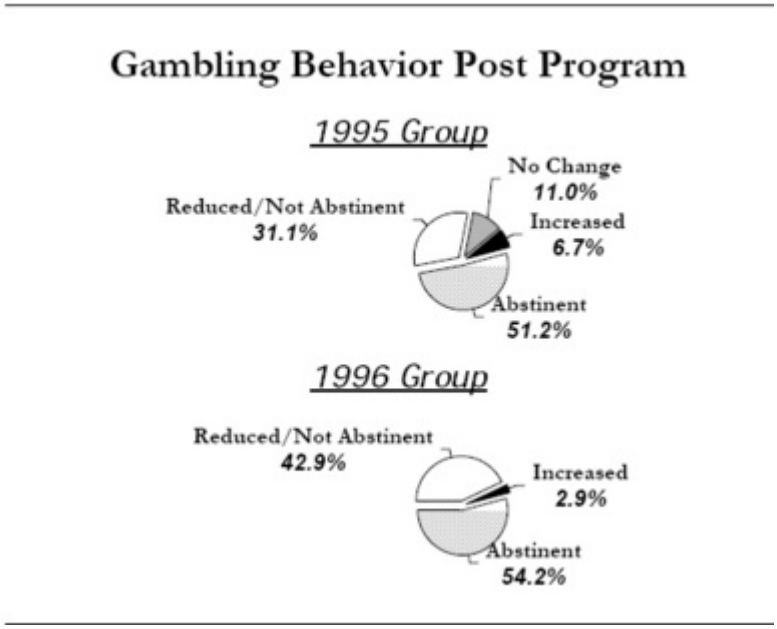
The WAGER, Vol. 2(38) – Outcomes of a problem gambling harm-reduction program

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A sample of 114 randomly selected clients participating in The Donwood Problem Gambling Program from April 1995 to March 1997 were assessed at one- and two-year follow-up points*. Clients entering the program in 1995 are considered the "1995 group" while those entering in 1996 are the "1996 group". The components of the harm-reduction program include brief solution-focused counseling, educational workshops, and life skills groups. The assessment, conducted via telephone by trained volunteers, consisted of two questionnaires: (1) a gambling behavior survey exploring gambling frequency and dollar amounts gambled, and (2) a quality of life survey on eleven life areas. The response rate for this study was 70.2%. Of the 35 clients assessed from the 1995 group, 97% had remained abstinent or reduced their gambling two years after leaving the program. Of the 45 clients in the 1996 group, 82.2% had remained abstinent or reduced their gambling one year after completing the program. The quality of life had improved for both groups, with no significant differences between the two groups. In addition, the mean reduction in gambling behavior (measured by frequency and dollar amount gambled) did not differ between the two groups. These preliminary findings imply that post-treatment gambling behaviors are retained as successfully at two years as at one year. What these findings cannot demonstrate, due to the lack of a control group, is which improved behaviors are directly associated with the harm-reduction treatment program. In addition, relapse rates at points along the continuum (e.g., 3 months, 6 months) may reveal different patterns than these results. Continued follow-up and use of a comparison group will allow for more solid inferences about treatment success among problem gamblers.



Source: *Chen, P., & Horbay, R. (1997, August). Evaluation of an integrated, centred approach to problem gambling. Paper presented at the 11th Annual Conference on Gambling, New Orleans, LA.