Environmental Assessment of Gambling Products and Activities in Your Community and Online

Why should you consider implementing an environmental assessment of gambling products and activities?

Obtaining data on gambling and problem gambling rates for both youth and adults in your community is an integral part of building capacity. The community readiness model is also a vital process in understanding when a community is ready to pre-plan and initiate an individual and environmental strategy to create a behavior change. An environmental assessment of gambling products and activities available in your community and online is a vital step toward building capacity and awareness. The prevention staff and stakeholders can take part in a joint initiative and learn first-hand how gambling is making an impact. It is important to remember that engagement of key stakeholders occurs through repetition of information and reinforcement in doing or accomplishing a task to learn more about a subject. An environmental assessment of gambling products and activities can help with both of those key endeavors.

> *"Environmental scans can be instrumental in building a case for specific program implementation. In other words, this strategy can help prove a point to those in power and in turn, aid in decision making." — Community Impact of North Carolina*

What are the benefits of implementing this assessment with a team of stakeholders?

The team of stakeholders can include champions in the community and youth. If the team involves working with youth, it will be important to consider safety concerns and the age restrictions of gambling establishments. Working with a team can help raise awareness of the following:

1) Youth gambling
2) The different types of legal and illegal gambling
3) Gray area unregulated gambling*
4) How gambling is marketed and advertised
5) Online gambling accessibility
6) Online gambling anonymity
7) Cashless transactions available online
8) Number of gambling establishments
9) Policies and practices of gambling establishments.

*Gray area unregulated gambling allows for gambling mechanics and psychological principles to be imbedded in the games.

This could include online activities such as loot box purchases in video games, social gaming and social casino gaming and establishments such as sweepstakes parlors or fish games.

"Youth will have the opportunity to become involved with their communities on a different level and can be part of positive change. Not only can this strategy empower local youth but can allow them to become a greater asset to their community." — Community Impact of North Carolina

What is an environmental assessment of gambling products and activities?

An environmental assessment of gambling products includes looking at all available legal, illegal and gray area unregulated gambling available to those who live in your community. It is vital to include an online scan because many states have legalized online sports betting and online casino betting. The scan needs to also include illegal betting and gray area unregulated gambling to fully understand the landscape of gambling products and activities available online. The steps to initiate an environmental scan include:

- Recruit participants (youth or champion stakeholders in the community)
- Identify target sites (in the community and online)
- Train participants (rules, safety, empowerment, how to collect data, tools needed)
- Implement (two people in each group, collect information, share information)
- Debrief participants (what worked, what didn't work, what should be adjusted)
- Highlight initiative (how will the information be shared and with which stakeholders)

"Oppositely, environmental scans can be crucial for identifying areas of environmental growth within a community. Illustrating any external threats to health is important for a community's wellness and the safety of their vulnerable communities, such as their youth." — Community Impact of North Carolina

What questions or areas of focus are important to the success of the environmental assessment?

Asking the right questions is essential in the environmental assessment. The list below can be adapted and added to based on the gambling landscape in your community.

1) Where is gambling located in stores? Is it located by checkout counters?
2) What type of gambling products and activities are available in local stores?
3) Do youth purchase or have access to gambling products or activities?
4) What are the different ways gambling activities and products are advertised in the community?
5) Do certain products appeal to certain people?
6) How much does the gambling product or activity cost?
7) Are there any spending limits enforced on gambling products or activities?
8) Does your community have a casino, riverboat casino or racino?
9) Are there casinos in other states close to the state line near your community?
10) Is there charitable gaming located at a church or community center?

11) Who has access to the gambling products or activities?
12) Do you have sports betting in your state? Is sports betting available online?
13) Can you access online casinos in your state?
14) Is there geofencing to prevent residents from gambling online on illegal sites?
15) Who can access online gambling sites both illegal and legal?
16) Do online gambling sites allow for credit card use?
17) Are there ATMs available near gambling products or activities?
18) What video games have loot boxes? Do children have access to those games?
19) Are you able to access online social casino games? Do children have access to those games?
20) What other types of gambling mechanics and psychological principles can you find in social games or video games?
21) Do online gambling providers have a presence on social media?
22) Who has access to the social media pages operated by gambling providers?
23) Is there an Esports arena in your community?
24) Is online Esports betting available in your community?
25) Are there Esports teams in your community?
26) Are there any sports teams who have sponsorships with gambling firms in your community?
27) Is onsite gambling available at sporting events in your community?

"Environmental scans give coalitions the tools to identify community strengths. Strengths are important to highlight because it allows the opportunity to further improve areas of greatness, such as resources or policies." — Community Impact of North Carolina

What tools will you need?

The tools you will need to implement the environment assessment include:
1) Computer and internet access
2) Phone or camera to take pictures
3) A way to collect information from the team in one central location
4) PowerPoint to create a presentation
5) Word or another app to create a two-page fact sheet(s) with information to share.

"At its core, the strategy aims to collect data. The data can be gathered from various mediums and should be unique to the community at hand." — Community Impact of North Carolina

What is the ultimate goal of the assessment?

The ultimate goal of the assessment is to identify the risk factors that can contribute to problem gambling of adults and access to gambling for youth. Conducting the scan allows you to assess and document the 4 Ps: Price, Product, Promotion and Place and the 3 Gs: Legal Gambling, Illegal Gambling and Gray Area Gambling.

What are the safety concerns during an assessment?

Safety is also a concern during an environmental assessment. It is always important to go in pairs, ask to speak to the manager to share the purpose of the assessment and even leave if the situation does not feel safe. If involving youth, consider the age restrictions of the gambling establishment before assigning them that task.

REFERENCES: Community Impact of North Carolina, Environmental Scanning, Fact Sheet, 2022. • Prevention First Alcohol Policy Resource Center, Environmental Scanning, Fact Sheet, 2022

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