

地檢署設戒賭轉介服務

強制初犯賭徒接受治療



(左起)胡國立、賀錦麗、趙汝維及岑修女，宣布設立戒賭轉介服務，幫助有需要人士脫離賭海。(本報記者攝)

【明報專訊】有調查發現，三藩市、也令司法部門高度關注；三藩市地方檢察官賀錦麗宣布成立戒賭轉介服務，硬性要求初犯者參加為期十周的雙語輔導及康復課程，協助職業或病態賭徒脫離賭海。

雙語輔導課程為期十周

這項戒賭轉介服務由地檢處及NICOS華裔健康聯盟合作推出。賀錦麗出席昨日的記者會時表示，賭博已經成為亞裔社區一個常見及急待解決的社會問題。「賭徒不單影響個人生

活，也為家人帶來嚴重困擾。」她希望新計劃可以幫助初犯者真正戒除賭博陋習。

從即日起，任何人士如因沉迷賭博而犯下任何輕微罪行，地檢處會先安排初犯者到社區法庭接受審訊，並硬性要求初犯者參加一個為期十周的雙語輔導及康復課程，取代罰款、入獄或進行社區服務等刑罰。戒賭課程則由華裔健康聯盟屬下的三個社區機構：三藩市列治文心理輔導中心、聖瑪利茶會及金美倫堂提供。

NICOS華裔健康聯盟為三藩市地檢處亞太裔社區顧問委員會成員之一。聯盟行政總監胡國立表示，鑑於賭博問題在華人社區愈來愈嚴重，已被加

州亞太事務委員會列作今年的重要討論議題之一，所以向地檢處爭取設立這項計劃，可望以治療代替懲罰的方式，幫助有需要人士戒除賭癮。

「除了推行這項新計劃，我們也四處到賭場宣傳戒賭熱線。」他表示現時灣區只有一個賭場願意張貼中文熱線電話，1-888-968-7888。

三分之一家暴因賭而起

金美倫堂社工岑修女指出，賭博其實是一種眼看不見的罪行 (Unseen Crime)，在她接觸的華人個案中，近三分之一的家庭暴力事件，均由賭博而起。「可惜中國人社會中，以為賭博與一般家庭活動無異，賭徒本身或家人很少主動尋求協助，直至賭徒負債累累。」

三藩市列治文心理輔導中心每年大約幫助100名華裔賭徒或其家人，戒賭計劃負責人兼臨床心理學家趙汝維博士指出，華人移民美國後，大都期望一個美好將來，他們以為賭博也是「搵快錢」工具之一，於是不知不覺誤入賭海，不能自拔。

過分沉迷賭海，嚴重者可以變成「病態賭徒」，屬於醫學精神科的一種疾病。

病態賭徒經歷三階段

進入病態賭徒的第一階段是「贏錢階段」。賭徒起初只是為娛樂才間中

賭博。但往往因為贏了錢，而變得更加經常賭博，注碼亦會加大。這時，他們經常想贏大錢，而對贏錢過分樂觀及過分自信。

第二階段是「輸錢階段」。賭徒由中間贏錢，變成了經常輸錢。這時，他們腦裡經常只有賭博，並存有「翻本」期望。他們會千方百計借錢賭博，也會拖欠還款或無力還款。對家人也減少關懷、說謊，家庭生活也變得不愉快，甚至影響工作。

到了第三階段的「沮喪階段」，他們的借貸更趨嚴重 (包括合法及非法途徑)，也因此信譽受損。與家人及朋友也出現疏離現象，因為要花更多時間及金額投入賭博，也因此可能做出一些非法行為。

根據其經驗，過往來求助的人，戒賭成功率只有三分之一。所有求助人士中，男與女的比例約為3比1，他們大都是30到50歲，有些移民已有十年的華僑，而且他們賭博所涉及的金額也較其他族裔為高，動輒超過一萬至數十萬元。

賀錦麗強調，任何人如再犯或因賭博而涉及其他嚴重罪行，處方也會按照法例作出懲戒。根據法例，任何人如參與非法賭盤，包括賽馬、賽狗、球賽、賽車等，均違反三藩市刑事法第三條260至341節，如被定罪，除留有案底外，最高可罰款100至500元，及判監六個月，或兩者同時執行。

District Attorney Office Set up Problem Gambling Referral Service To make it compulsory for first-time gambling offenders to receive therapy

<Ming Pao Special Report>

Investigation revealed that more than 70% of Asian residents in San Francisco identified gambling as a serious social problem. The Department of Law Enforcement is highly concerned about crimes caused by problem gambling, such as family violence, elderly abuse and money swindling. San Francisco DA, Kamala Harris, announced the establishment of a problem gambling referral service making it compulsory for first-time offenders to participate in a 10-week bilingual counseling and convalescence program to help professional and pathological gamblers to quit.

10-week Bilingual Counseling Course

This Problem Gambling Referral Service is collaboration between DA Office and NICOS Chinese Health Coalition. In yesterday's press conference, Kamala Harris said that gambling which had become a common social problem in the Asian community required urgent attention. "Gamblers not only disrupt their own lives, they also bring serious disturbance to their families." She hoped the new project could help first-time offenders to quit gambling addiction. With immediate effect, anyone who has committed minor offences due to gambling addiction will be arraigned in the community court. They will be required to participate in a 10-week bilingual counseling and convalescence program in place of other forms of punishment such as a fine, jail terms or social service. This program is provided by 3 subsidiary organizations of NICOS Chinese Health Coalition: San Francisco Richmond Area Multi-services Center, St. Mary's Teahouse Ministry and Cameron House.

NICOS Chinese Health Coalition is a member of the San Francisco DA Office's API Steering Committee. Its executive director, Kent Woo, said that problem-gambling had been listed as an important issue for discussion this year by the API Steering Committee in view of the increasing seriousness of the problem in the Chinese community. It was hoped that the installation of this program using therapy to replace punishment could help the needy quit gambling addiction. "Apart from implementing this new program, we also visited all the casinos to promote our problem gambling hotline." He said that at the moment only one casino in the Bay Area willing to display the Chinese poster with the hotline number: 1-888-968-7888.

One third of family violence is due to gambling

Cameron House social worker, Sister Shum, pointed out that gambling was actually an unseen crime. From the Chinese cases which she had dealt with, nearly one third of the family violence were caused by gambling. "Unfortunately, in the Chinese society, gambling is not viewed differently from other family activities. Gamblers and their family members seldom actively seek help, until the gamblers become heavily in debts."

San Francisco Richmond Area Multi-Services Center assisted about 100 Chinese gamblers and their relatives every year. Dr Eddie Chiu, clinical psychologist in charge of the problem

gambling program at the center, pointed out that majority of the Chinese immigrants anticipated a bright future in America. They mistook gambling as one of the “make fast money” tools, until they became addicted without knowing it.

Those who are excessively addicted to gambling can become “pathological gambler”. It belongs to a psychiatric illness.

Pathological gamblers experience 3 stages of development

The first stage of pathological gambling is the “Winning stage”. Gamblers initially gamble occasionally for entertainment. But, it is always because of winning which prompts them to gamble more often and with bigger stake. By then, they become over-optimistic and over-confident about winning and they want to win big money.

The second stage is “Losing stage”. Gamblers progress from occasional winning to frequent losing. By now, they become obsessed with gambling. They expect to “get back what they have lost”. They try every means to borrow and procrastinate payment or unable to pay back. They become less concerned about their family and lie to them. Family relationship is strained and even their work is affected.

The third stage is “Depression stage”. Advancing to this stage, they borrow heavily (via both legal and illegal routes). Their credits are ruined. They become more isolated from their family and friends because they spend most of their time gambling. They may engage in illegal activities because they need large amount of money for betting.

Based on his experience, only one third of those who sought help succeeded in quitting. Among those who sought help, male to female ratio is 3:1. Most are between 30 and 50 years of age. Some are Chinese immigrants who have migrated here for over ten years. The amount of money they spent in gambling is also higher than other racial groups, easily exceeding \$10,000 to several hundred thousands.

Kamala Harris emphasized that any repeated offenders or any involvement in more serious crimes will be punished according to the laws. Based on the laws, anyone participating in illegal gambling, including horse-racing, dog-racing, football-betting, car-racing, etc., is against the San Francisco criminal legislature no. 3, section 260-341. Apart from a criminal record, the maximum punishment is a fine of \$100 to \$500 or 6 months of jail sentence or both.

<Translated by Josephine Wong, NICOS Chinese Health Coalition>