

New York pumps up gambling treatment as it expands gambling

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In this Dec. 2, 2016, file photo, a game of roulette is simulated at Tioga Downs during a media tour of the new gaming floor in Nichols, N.Y. Thousands of new slot machines and gaming tables that are part of New York state's casino growth spurt will bring millions of dollars a year to treat problem gamblers. (AP Photo/Heather Ainsworth, File)

Thousands of new slot machines and table games debuting this month as part of New York state's casino growth spurt are bringing not only more

chances to gamble, but also millions of dollars more to help problem gamblers.

The openings of the del Lago Resort & Casino in the Finger Lakes on Wednesday and Schenectady's Rivers Casino and Resort next week will pump money into state treatment and awareness programs under \$500 annual licensing fees assessed on each slot machine and table game. The fees should eventually add about \$3.3 million a year to state gambling programs, a dramatic increase in such funding.

"The norms just can't be that we have new casinos and look at the economic development that's going to be," said Jim Maney, executive director of the New York Council on Problem Gambling. "With the expansion of anything, the expansion of gambling, comes the probability that there's going to be an increase in folks that are having difficulties with it."

State lawmakers introduced a per-game fee in the law that authorized four new upstate New York casinos. The fees, similar to assessments in some other states, are expected to generate \$3.3 million once all four casinos are open. The state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services currently spends \$2.6 million annually for gambling treatment and prevention.



This Dec. 2, 2016 file photo shows the new gaming floor at Tioga Downs during a media tour of the casino in Nichols, N.Y. Thousands of new slot machines and gaming tables that are part of New York state's casino growth spurt will bring millions of dollars a year to treat problem gamblers. (AP Photo/Heather Ainsworth, File)

The state agency plans to expand so-called centers for excellence, which link problem gamblers with treatment and raise awareness.

The dual openings this month come soon after the Southern Tier's Tioga Downs converted into a slots and table-games casino from one with video-lottery terminals. The fourth upstate casino authorized by state regulators in 2014, the Montreign Resort Casino in the Catskills, is due to open in March 2018. They are entering a crowded regional gambling market, with casinos opening in Maryland, Massachusetts, Delaware, Rhode Island and elsewhere.

In New York alone, the new casinos come in addition to six Indian casinos and eight horse tracks with slot-like video lottery terminals. Also, state lawmakers last year legalized daily fantasy sports.



This Dec. 2, 2016, file photo shows the Tioga Downs in Nichols, N.Y. Thousands of new slot machines and gaming tables that are part of New York state's casino growth spurt will bring millions of dollars a year to treat problem gamblers. State lawmakers introduced a per-game fee similar to one in some other states in the law that authorized four new upstate New York casinos. (AP Photo/Heather Ainsworth, File)

Existing casinos provide money to New York for education and other uses, but earmarking funds specifically for problem gambling is new for the state.

New York already has made it easier for problem gamblers to be treated

at its six addiction-treatment centers. A waiver allows them to admit people with problem gambling as their primary diagnosis, as opposed to chemical dependencies, for up to 30 days.

Last year, there were 1,272 calls to a toll-free number for problem gamblers and 229 cases of people seeking care for problem gambling at the 17 state-funded outpatient clinics.

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