SINGAPORE: Every social service centre in Singapore should have trained counsellors to identify problem gamblers.

This tops the wish list of the National Council on Problem Gambling, which will soon begin its second term.

The council also wants to reach out to more young people by working with schools.

It says the fundamentals to tackle problem gambling already exist but it wants to do much more.

The council has just ended its first two-year term and now wants to focus its next two years on refining and expanding its current activities.

That is why it wants to train at least one staff member in every social service centre to identify people with excessive gambling habits.

Professor David Chan, Service Delivery and Research Sub-Committee, National Council on Problem Gambling said: "There is a need to make sure that these services are integrated, that individuals that come and seek help are properly referred. Sometimes individuals with problems don't come to seek help, and the challenge is how then for us to reach out to these individuals."

Over 250 social service staff have already been trained to identify problem gamblers in the past two years. But the council feels that this is not enough.

The council says the issue of problem gambling is still relatively unexplored, not just in Singapore but in other parts of the world.

So for the past two years, the council has been working to plug the information gaps.

Currently, an International Advisory Panel is being formed to beef up the council's expertise in research, service delivery and prevention measures.

More details are expected to be announced in the next two months and young people will continue to be the council's focus. That is why it hopes to include problem gambling as part of the school curriculum.

Debra Soon, Youth Sub-Committee, National Council on Problem Gambling, said: "We know from our informal feedback that certain schools would have used the impending opening of the integrated resorts as a topic for discussion and we'd like to be able to see whether or not we can work with schools to get more of these topics in."

The council begins its second two-year term with five new members.

While it is optimistic of the progress made so far, it says it will get a better feel of how it has performed when results of its annual survey on public attitudes towards gambling are released in the coming months. - CNA/ch