



The Madness of Problem Gambling

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

March is known for the madness of college basketball tournaments. March is also Problem Gambling Awareness month across the U.S.

[Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](#) (WCPG) Executive Director Rose Gruber says that's no coincidence. "March is usually a busy month for our Helpline as college basketball hits its peak," Gruber says. "It's really the culmination of a stretch that can be difficult for problem gamblers with the stress of the holidays and holiday bills coming due, then the Super Bowl followed by all of the hype of basketball tournament time."

The [National Council on Problem Gambling](#) (NCPG) describes the month-long campaign as a grassroots public awareness and outreach effort with a goal of educating the general public, and health care professionals, about the warning signs of problem gambling.

During March, WCPG will step up its public awareness efforts with additional outreach to schools and to correctional facilities. "With the addition of our outreach coordinator we are looking to reach more and more young people," Gruber says. "We also know that many people in the correctional system are dealing with addiction, including gambling problems."

Gruber adds that problem gambling is different than other addictions. "You just don't have the outward signs like drugs or alcohol," Gruber says. "Family and friends usually don't recognize there's a problem until it's taken a heavy financial toll. We want people to know about problem gambling and understand what the signs are and that there are community resources available to provide assistance."

Gruber says the warning signs of problem or compulsive gambling include:

- Constantly thinking about or talking about gambling
- Repeated attempts to control, cut back or stop gambling
- Gambling to escape stress or other problems
- Spending more time or money on gambling than you can afford
- Gambling until all of your money is gone or gambling to try to win back previous losses

- Lying about your gambling activity
- Borrowing money for gambling
- Stealing money to get more cash to bet
- Neglecting work, family, household responsibilities or personal needs because of gambling

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling operates a statewide Helpline that is answered 24/7. The Helpline is staffed by trained volunteers and professional staff who work with a statewide network of qualified treatment providers, Gamblers Anonymous and GamAnon (for family members) chapters where callers can be referred. The Helpline received a record 14,731 calls in 2014.

WCPG also offers services through Live Chat on the Council's website at www.wi-problemgamblers.org.