



# Community Concerns

## Dealing With A Gambling Problem

(NAPS)—People with a gambling problem can find help—regardless of how long they have been gambling or how many financial or legal problems their addiction has caused. The National Council on Problem Gambling, which offers a 24-hour problem gambling helpline, says one of the first steps is to recognize the signs of problem gambling. They include:

- Gambling for more time and/or more money than intended.
- Gambling more to try to win back what you've lost.
- Lying to loved ones about the amount of time or money spent gambling.

Gambling can be considered problematic, and no longer recreational, when it causes a disruption in any major area of a person's life.

### Finding Help

It's estimated that 2 to 3 percent of the U.S. population has a gambling problem. It can affect men or women of any age, race or religion, regardless of social status. If you think you or someone you know might have a problem, the National Council on Problem Gambling may be able to help. Its mission is to increase public awareness of problem and pathological gambling and to ensure the widespread availability of treatment for problem gamblers and their families. It also operates the 24-hour National Problem Gambling Helpline, a link to treatment, recovery groups and other resources for problem gamblers and their family members.

A gambling helpline proved invaluable for Jane Skavinsky, a grandmother whose gambling problem began with simple bingo games, spiraled out of control and ended with her spending her 50th birthday in prison.



**Recovery from gambling addiction has strengthened the marriage of Jane and Bob Skavinsky.**

"My gambling addiction led to my losing focus on anything that didn't have to do with bingo. Soon I was spending my whole paycheck on it," Skavinsky explains.

Eventually, Skavinsky began embezzling money from her office to help fund her habit. She was sentenced to a year in jail for stealing a quarter of a million dollars.

"It was only after months of mental anguish that I called the helpline. I did not realize that my gambling was the root of all my problems," she explains. Through its referral to treatment and self-help groups, the helpline helped Skavinsky begin to recover. Today, she works to spread the word about problem gambling and helps others beat their addiction.

"A problem gambler doesn't need to wait to 'hit bottom' before asking for help," says Keith Whyte, executive director, the National Council on Problem Gambling. "And because so many addicted gamblers are in denial and will never call, we offer our services to the nongamblers as well. When their problem is your problem, you can call the Helpline to learn what help is available."

To learn more or to find help, call toll free (800) 522-4700 or visit [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).

### Did You Know?

The National Council on Problem Gambling is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. To learn more or to find help, call toll free (800) 522-4700 or visit [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).

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