

March = Madness for Problem Gamblers

For Immediate Release

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(Green Bay, WI) – The teams are set. A total of 68 teams will participate in the NCAA Men’s College Basketball Tournament starting today, most facing long odds of “winning it all.” The odds are also long for problem and compulsive gamblers who face a difficult time during “March Madness.”

“There are certainly a lot of thrills this time of year for fans of college basketball,” said Rose Gruber, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling. “But for those who are dealing with a gambling addiction, the thrill of betting on what’s happening on the court can quickly turn to pain.”

Illegal sports betting is a big industry in the United States with billions of dollars wagered during March Madness.

Gruber adds that the college basketball tourney comes at a time when gambling debts may be adding up for someone caught in the web of problem gambling. “After facing bills from the holidays, the Super Bowl in February and the recent start of the NASCAR season, basketball tournament time can be a last straw for some problem and compulsive gamblers,” Gruber said. “It’s certainly one of the busiest times of the year for our Problem Gambling Helpline.”

March Madness is also very popular with young people, who are particularly susceptible to problem gambling. “An alarming percentage of young people are engaged in gambling activities, including betting on sports,” Gruber said. “Studies have shown that the rate of problem and compulsive gambling is nearly twice as high for young people compared to the general population.”

The good news in all of this is that a gambling addiction is treatable. “There is help available for those who have a gambling problem or feel they may be headed in that direction,” Gruber said. “A call to the Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5 will put you in touch with available resources in your area to help you deal with the problem.”

(more)

As the college basketball tournament tips off, Gruber says it's crucial for people to understand the rules of responsible gambling, including:

- If you choose to gamble, be sure it's for entertainment
- Treat your losses as the cost of entertainment
- Set a dollar limit and a time limit and stick to those limits
- Expect to lose; the odds are against you
- Never borrow money to gamble
- Be sure there is a balance in your life; gambling should not be all that you do
- Don't gamble as a way to deal with an emotional or physical issue
- Understand the warning signs of problem gambling

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5 for confidential help.

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*The **Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling** is funded by a public awareness grant from the State of Wisconsin and additional funding from donors, including Wisconsin Native American Tribes. The Council operates a 24-hour Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5, distributes informational brochures, organizes an annual statewide conference, makes presentations on problem gambling and conducts training sessions for treatment providers interested in the special requirements for working with compulsive gamblers and their families.*

For more information, visit www.wi-problemgamblers.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WisconsinCouncilonProblemGambling.

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