



WISCONSIN COUNCIL
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

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A Busy Year for Wisconsin's Problem Gambling Helpline *Total Helpline calls reach 13,528 in 2011*

For Immediate Release

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(Green Bay, WI) – It was another busy year for the Problem Gambling Helpline operated by the [Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](#) (WCPG). Over the course of 2011, the Helpline received a total of 13,528 calls.

“While that’s a six percent drop from 2010, it’s not surprising that the call activity remains brisk given the economy, and the availability of gambling in person and on the Internet,” said [Rose Gruber](#), WCPG Executive Director. “What is alarming, however, is that the average reported debt from callers in 2011 jumped to \$157,100 from the 2010 level of \$43,800.”

Because of confidentiality, the Helpline report statistics are based on callers who are willing to share such information. “The dramatic increase in the average reported debt is a reflection of several callers who had amassed well over a hundred thousand dollars in debt due to gambling,” Gruber said. “We’ve found that most problem gamblers are pretty good at hiding their addiction so many of them face mounting debt before they take the step to call for help. By then the gambling problem has typically affected many others, including the gambler’s family, friends and often his or her employer.”

Monthly calls to the Helpline in 2011 ranged from a low of 892 in July to a high of 1,342 in January. Among the other numbers in the Helpline report:

- 45 callers reported thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- 22 callers reported having to file for bankruptcy as a result of their gambling problems
- The split between male and female callers was fairly even

WCPG estimates that five percent to seven percent of Wisconsin’s population – roughly 342,000 people – is believed to be problem or compulsive gamblers. The rate of problem or compulsive gamblers is thought to be about double those figures for teens and young adults.

(more)

Looking ahead, Gruber says they don’t really expect the pace of Helpline calls to drop off this year. “In fact, we typically see a spike in calls this time of year,” Gruber said. “Holiday shopping bills are arriving in the mail and there’s also the temptation of the college football bowl games and the pro football playoffs including the Super Bowl.”

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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. WCPG is now on Facebook. Log on to Facebook, search for “Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling” and then click “like.”

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling is proud to host the 26th National Conference on Problem Gambling, July 13-14, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee.

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