



WISCONSINCOUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

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Problem Gambling – A “Hidden Addiction” With A Wide Impact

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(Green Bay, WI) – It doesn't have the outward signs that people recognize with alcohol or drug addictions and you can't "overdose" on gambling. Still, compulsive gambling carries with it many risks to the well being of the individual gambler, as well as his or her family.

“For most people, gambling is an accepted part of the social landscape – a fun form of entertainment,” said Rose Gruber, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling (WCPG). “But for those who are problem or compulsive gamblers, the impact can be devastating for the gambler as well as for family, friends and even co-workers.”

It's estimated that five percent to seven percent of Wisconsin's population are problem or compulsive gamblers.

“The main problem with gambling addictions relates to the gambler's finances,” said Gruber. “We often hear from gamblers, both men and women, who have gone through all of their savings just to keep playing. They become so consumed with gambling that they lose their jobs and destroy their family's primary source of income.”

Gruber adds that it's not uncommon for a gambling addict to borrow money from friends and family members and he or she may even steal or turn to other criminal activity to support their habit. Gruber says one problem gambler recently called the Helpline saying...“I can't stay away from the casino. It's like I'm another person when I'm there...I get crazy. I must be addicted to gambling.”

Overcominggambling.com reports that the average debt incurred by a male pathological gambler in the U.S. is between \$55,000 and \$90,000. For female compulsive gamblers, that amount is \$15,000.

Gruber notes that last year alone, more than 14,000 people called WCPG's statewide problem gambling Helpline (1-800-GAMBLE-5). Of those who shared information through the Helpline, the average debt was nearly \$44,000 in 2010 and \$36,000 in 2009.

(more)

Gruber also says the financial distress can lead to other issues including suicide. The National Council on Problem Gambling says an estimated 20% of compulsive gamblers attempt suicide at some point in their lives. More than 50 callers to the WCPG Helpline last year reported thoughts of suicide, while several others reported suicide attempts.

“Calling the Helpline is an important first step for someone addicted to gambling,” Gruber said. “It’s also an important resource for those who may be concerned about a family member or friend who they feel has a gambling problem.”

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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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