



**WISCONSIN COUNCIL
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

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Another Busy Year for the Problem Gambling Helpline *2012 total calls just short of record pace*

For Immediate Release

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(Green Bay, WI) – It was another busy year for the [Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](#) (WCPG) Helpline, which answered 14,464 calls in 2012. That total represents an increase of 6.9 percent from 2011 and was just 140 shy of the record 14,604 calls that were taken in 2009.

WCPG is a statewide organization that provides resources, public awareness and education on problem and pathological gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling. WCPG's Helpline operates 24/7 as a resource for anyone facing a gambling problem.

“It’s certainly significant that the Helpline remains as busy as it is,” said Rose Gruber, [WCPG Executive Director Rose Gruber](#). “But the total number of calls is really just part of the story. There are other significant numbers in our annual Helpline Report that show how devastating a gambling addiction can be.”

Among the other numbers in the Helpline report:

- 45 callers reported thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- 37 callers reported having to file for bankruptcy due to their gambling problem
- The average gambling debt of callers was \$39,849 in 2012, while the median debt was \$17,000. (The average debt for 2012 was significantly lower than in 2011 when several callers reported very high debt amounts that drove the average debt up.)

Because of confidentiality, the Helpline Report statistics are based on callers who are willing to share such information.

“The tough economy, accessibility to gambling and increased awareness of the Helpline and services available to problem gamblers all probably play a role in the call activity,” Gruber added. WCPG estimates that five percent to seven percent of Wisconsin’s population – roughly 345,000 people – are believed to be problem or compulsive gamblers. The rate of problem or compulsive gambling is thought to be about double those figures for teens and young adults.

“We’ve found through the years that most problem gamblers are pretty good at hiding their addiction since there are no outward signs that are typically seen with a drug or alcohol or other

(more)

addictions,” Gruber said. “Mounting debt, bankruptcy and other problems eventually get them to make the call for help. But by then, the gambling problem has typically affected many others, including the gambler’s family and friends and even co-workers and his or her employer.”

Looking ahead, Gruber says they expect the pace of Helpline calls to remain steady. “In fact, we typically see a spike in calls this time of year,” Gruber said. “Holiday shopping bills are coming due, there may be losses from the college bowl season and the biggest gambling day of the year – the Super Bowl – is just ahead.”

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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 [Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](http://www.wisconsin-council.org) or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WisconsinCouncilonProblemGambling.

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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