



March = Spring, Basketball, Problem Gambling Awareness

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SPOKESPERSON: *Available for comment*

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(Green Bay, WI) – March is here, which means spring is on its way and the basketball world will turn its focus to the big college hoops tournament. With so many eyes watching and so much money riding on the basketball games it’s only appropriate that March is also Problem Gambling Awareness Month.

“March is most often a busy month for Wisconsin’s Problem Gambling Helpline as college basketball tournament time arrives,” said Rose Blozinski, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling (WCPG). “Approximately 2 million U.S. adults, or 1% of the population, are estimated to meet criteria for serious gambling problems, and another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered to have moderate gambling problems; yet for many, gambling remains a hidden addiction. For those who are addicted to sports gambling, this is really the culmination of a difficult stretch – with the football bowl season, Super Bowl and now the basketball tourney.”

Problem Gambling Awareness Month is a grassroots effort that brings together a wide range of stakeholders - public health organizations, advocacy groups and gambling operators – who work collaboratively to let people know that hope and help exist. “Across the country, groups hold conferences, host screening and training days, run media campaigns, and conduct outreach to people who can make a difference in ensuring that problem gambling services are widely available and accessible,” said Keith Whyte, Executive Director, National Council on Problem Gambling.

Blozinski says the estimated national social cost to families and communities due to bankruptcy, divorce, job loss, home loss, and criminal justice costs associated with problem gambling is \$6.7 billion each year. “Family, friends and co-workers usually don’t recognize that there is a problem until it’s taken a huge financial toll on the gambler.

We want people to be more aware of the signs of problem gambling and know that there are counselors and programs available to help.”

The warning signs of problem or compulsive gambling include:

- Always thinking or talking about gambling
- Spending more time or money on gambling than you can afford
- Repeated attempts to cut back or stop gambling
- Gambling to escape stress or other problems
- Gambling to win back your previous losses
- Gambling until all of your money is gone
- Lying to family members and others about your gambling activity
- Borrowing money or stealing money to gamble
- Neglecting work, family, household responsibilities or personal needs because of gambling

WCPG also holds its annual statewide Problem Gambling Conference in March. The 20th annual conference is set for March 14th - 15th at the Blue Harbor Resort in Sheboygan, WI.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5, Text at 1-850-888-HOPE or Live Chat through the WCPG website at www.wi-problemgamblers.org.

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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 1-850-888-HOPE Textline, and Chat available on www.wi-problemgamblers.org, 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.*