



A Record Year for Wisconsin's Problem Gambling Helpline

(Green Bay, WI) – The [Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](#) (WCPG) Helpline was busy in 2014 with a record 14,731 calls received, an increase of 5.6 percent from 2013 and topping the previous record of 14,604 calls in 2009.

WCPG is a statewide organization that provides resources, public awareness and education on problem gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling. WCPG's Helpline – at 1-800-GAMBLE-5 – operates 24/7 as a resource for anyone facing a gambling problem.

“It certainly stands out that the Helpline took more calls than ever in 2014,” said Rose Gruber, WCPG Executive Director. “While the total number of calls is important, it really only tells 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:

- 16 callers reported thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- 17 callers reported having to file for bankruptcy due to their gambling problem
- The average gambling debt of callers was nearly \$47,000 in 2014, while the median debt was \$20,000

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

“The Helpline is a valuable resource for those dealing with a gambling addiction or for anyone who may have a relative or friend that is a problem gambler,” Gruber added. “We also recently added a Live Chat to our website for those who prefer to reach out for help online rather than make a call to the helpline. Either way, we are ready to listen and connect callers with resources in their area.”

Helpline calls and Live Chat contacts are answered by professional staff and trained volunteers who work with a statewide database of qualified treatment professionals, Gamblers Anonymous chapters and GamAnon (for family members) chapters to which callers can be referred.

Gruber adds that most problem gamblers are pretty good at hiding their addiction. “Unlike a drug or alcohol addiction, there are no outward signs that are typically seen with problem gambling,” she said. “Mounting debt, bankruptcy and other problems eventually prompt the call for help. By then, however, the gambling problem has typically affected many others, including the gambler’s family and friends and even co-workers and his or her employer.”

Gruber says they expect the pace of Helpline calls and Live Chat contacts to remain steady. “In fact, we typically see a spike in calls this time of year,” Gruber said. “Holiday shopping bills come due and there may be losses from the college bowl season and pro sports. Of course, one of the biggest gambling days of the year – the Super Bowl – is just ahead.”

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

*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 the [Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling](http://www.wisconsin-council-on-problem-gambling.org) website, visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WisconsinCouncilonProblemGambling or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/wcpgambling>

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