

The logo for the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. features a light green horizontal bar with the organization's name in bold black text. The bar is framed by a thin yellow circle on the left and a yellow bracket on the right.

**Florida Council  
on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.**

**Problem Gambling:  
An Overview of the HelpLine and Services**

**888-ADMIT-IT  
24-Hour Confidential Helpline  
[www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)**

## Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

- Not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) educational and advocacy organization established in 1988
- Primary mission is to increase public awareness about problem and compulsive gambling and provide services and supports to persons in need of assistance
- One of more than 35 state affiliates of the National Council on Problem Gambling
- Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and maintains neutral stance on gambling
- Under contract with Florida State government

## FCCG programs and services

- Toll-free Confidential 24-Hour HelpLine: **888-ADMIT-IT**
- Develop/conduct prevention/education/outreach programs for diverse populations
- Train mental health/medical/other health care professionals to assess/treat
- Design awareness/education/employee assistance/training programs for governments/gaming operators/others
- Sponsor/conduct research
- Represent public before policymakers/governmental bodies
- Coordinate/assist law enforcement/judicial authorities on problem gambling specific cases
- Impaired Professionals Program
- Adolescent/senior outreach programs
- Statewide Speakers Bureau

**What is gambling?**

**What is gambling?**

## **Gambling definition**

Any time you bet money or something of value (e.g. possession, status) on an uncertain outcome, you are gambling.

## Types of gambling

**What are some types of gambling?**

## Forms of gambling include...

- Lottery
- Horse/Dog Racing
- Slots/VLTs/EGMs
- Jai Alai
- Bingo
- Stocks/Business Risks
- Numbers
- Cards
- Cards, Not at a Casino
- Sports Betting
- Animal Fighting
- Slots/VLTs/EGMs, Not at a Casino
- Dice Games, Not at a Casino
- Games of Skill for Money
- Office Pools, Raffles or Charitable Small-Stakes Gambling
- Internet (location vs. type)
- Trading or “Chasing” Cards
- Flipping Coins
- Dares
- Other, Street Racing, Fighting

\* Public referendum in Broward County

## Cultural influences and role players

- **Who plays a role in the gambling picture?**

# Cultural influences

Slide 1 of 3

It's important to acknowledge cultural influences in order to readily understand the pervasiveness of gambling within society and in Florida.

- Government Promotion
  - State Lotteries
  - Support of Industry Expansion
  
- Corporate
  - Gambling is sanctioned entertainment option
    - Part of corporate culture
    - Promoted through conference locations, incentives, etc.
  
  - Market/sell products
    - Simulated games
    - Culture of urgency – immediate gratification

# Cultural influences

Slide 2 of 3

- Gaming Industry
  - Heavily promote and market
  - Provide transportation
  - Offer incentives that are hard to compete with
  
- Media, Entertainment, Need for Risk
  - Heavily promote and market, including unlawful forms
  - Elevated demand for risk in order to be “entertained”
  
- Workplace/Community Organizations
  - Sponsor gambling activities as social events/generate funds
  - Office pools

- Schools/Academia
  - To raise funds
  - As “sober-alternative” activities
  - As entertainment or special event
  
- Community Support/Lack of Problem Gambling Awareness
  - Economic Development
  - Belief in “a dollar and a dream”
  - “Get rich quick” mentality
  - Little awareness of gambling as addictive behavior or knowledge of its impacts on individual, family, community
  - Limited resources available for awareness, education, intervention and treatment for affected individuals

**Formula for risk**

**Acceptability**

**+ Accessibility**

**+ Availability**

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**Equals = Vulnerability to Problem and  
Pathological Gambling**

# What's the issue?

## Problem gambling

### **Gambling is a problem when it adversely affects:**

- Relationships
- Family and friends
- Physical, social and mental health
- School/work attendance and performance
- Financial status/choices
- Values/law
- Other areas of life

## Types of gamblers

- **Social Gambler**
  - Sets aside time and money to gamble. Gambling does not interfere with any aspect of their life
- **Problem Gambler**
  - Dedicates more time, money and thought to gambling. Gambling begins to interfere with other areas of their life
- **Pathological (Compulsive) Gambler**
  - Preoccupied with gambling

# Pathological (Compulsive) gambling diagnostic criteria

## American Psychiatric Association (APA)

(5 or more meet diagnostic criteria)

- Thinks constantly about gambling
- Increases bets to sustain thrill
- Exhibits agitation when cutting back
- Gambles as an escape
- Chases losses
- Lies to conceal activity
- Finances bets through illegal activities
- Jeopardizes significant relationships
- Relies on financial bailout
- Fails in effort to control or stop gambling

## Terms and classifications based upon DSM-IV criteria

At-Risk	1 - 2 criteria
Problem	3 - 4 criteria
Pathological (compulsive)	5 or more criteria

# Progression

- Pathological gambling can take years to develop
  - Several factors, including venue type
    - Continuous forms (e.g. slot machines, online gambling) have a faster onset
- Problem gambling among adolescents is viewed as a pre-clinical state. Likelihood to progress to adult classification depends upon variety of factors and influences, including prevention, education and treatment efforts.

# Phases of compulsive gambling

(1 of 2)

- Winning
  - Wins enhance self-esteem and ego. Losses are rationalized as bad luck or poor advice. The gambler frequently describes the “big win”.
  
- Losing
  - As losses become more frequent and self-esteem is jeopardized, the gambler will borrow money to “get even”. The gambler will hide losses and lie about where money went.

# Phases of compulsive gambling

(2 of 2)

- Desperation
  - Gambler becomes obsessed with getting even. Panics at thought that gambling action will end if credit or bailouts stop. Often will turn to illegal activities or contemplate suicide as a way out.
  
- Rock Bottom
  - Hopelessness sets in; suicidal ideation and attempts; arrests, divorce or jail; alcohol or drug involvement; emotional breakdown; and withdrawal symptoms.

## Impacts on families

- Research to date documents 8-10 persons adversely affected by gambler's activities
- Insurmountable bills, overextended debt and bankruptcy
- Loss of Employment
- Legal battles
- Neglect or Abuse
- Physical Illnesses
- Divorce
- Mental Breakdown/Emotional Problems
- Isolation
- Arrest and/or Imprisonment
- Suicide

## **Gambling and substance abuse**

- 30-50% of problem gamblers in treatment are substance abusers
- 10-30% of addicts in treatment are problem gamblers
- 20% of callers to the HelpLine report a drug or alcohol problem

# Compulsive gambling and physical and emotional health

- **Mental Health**

- Mental health disorders co-occur with pathological gambling
- Depression, anxiety, as well as increased risk for suicide ideation and attempts are common symptoms of pathological gambling

# Compulsive gambling and physical and emotional health

## Sleep Disorders

- Linked to depression, stress and anxiety
- REM sleep disruption due to exposure to alcohol or nicotine, or medications prescribed for depression or anxiety
- Loss of sleep
  - In 2007, a 30 year old man died from causes cited as over exhaustion from gambling online non-stop

# What Does the Research Show? Prevalence in Florida

## **Serious to Severe Gambling Difficulties** (At-risk, problem, and pathological)

- Adults - 9%
- Seniors – 5%
- Adolescents – 12%
- College students – prevalence study will be completed by mid year, 2008

# 24-Hour HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT)

- Statewide Access
- Staffed 24-Hours Daily
- Multilingual
- Handle Crisis and Non-Crisis Calls
- Supportive Intervention
  - Diverse Concerns
- Up-to-Date Resource and Referral Information
  - Self Help and Professional Treatment
    - Referrals
    - PATS Program
    - Soft Transfer
    - Peer Connect
  - Legal and Financial
- Data Collection
  - Demographic information
  - Identify areas in need

# Information compiled from HelpLine callers

(1 of 2)

## Related to financial issues:

- Precipitating event leading to call (e.g. overextended debt, substantial loss, fired from work, etc.)
- Relationship status
- Whether any minor children living at home
- Debt owed due to gambling
- To whom debt is owed
- If difficulty paying household bills due to gambling
- Whether gambled away equity, savings or retirement money
- If ever filed bankruptcy, and if yes, whether more than once
- Whether sold or pawned assets to gamble or pay off gambling debts

# Information compiled from HelpLine callers

(2 of 2)

- Employment status and if working, status (e.g. full-time at one job, full-time plus a second job, full-time student plus part-time work, etc.)
- Type of work
- If unemployed, whether related to gambling
- If problems at work or school, whether related to gambling
- Income
- If illegal acts have been committed due to gambling and if yes, what, and whether subject to legal actions
- Emotional status (e.g. depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, etc.)
- Alcohol and substance use history
- Primary gambling problem and location

# [ Sample Calls From HelpLine ]

- Caller advised she is addicted to scratch offs. She told me she called today because she told her husband she has a problem and has a credit card debt of \$2000.00. She also told me he told her to leave but she stated she is trying to get help for her problem and try to work things out with her husband. She gets a weekly allowance from her husband which has limited how much she gambles, but also told me that she takes deposit money from the job and then pays it back but she sees it as borrowing not stealing since she pays it back.

# [ Sample Calls From HelpLine ]

- Caller is the mother of a 47 year old gambler who plays blackjack at Hard Rock Hollywood. He has been gambling for 12 years and its been a problem for the past 4 years. 10 years ago he had to file bankruptcy because of gambling. He went to GA for a long time and apparently stayed clean for about 6 years. He has committed various illegal acts due to gambling including identity theft. Mother is wealthy but is tired of enabling son by bailing him out every time he has a debt. He has written bad checks to casinos and mother had to pay \$51k to a Vegas casino so that gambler would stay out of prison. He has lost at least \$200K to gambling and owes around \$180k to banks, credit card, friends, mortgage & gambling associates.

# [ Sample Calls From HelpLine ]

- Caller's daughter is married to a compulsive gambler. Daughter is the primary bread winner in the marriage and they have over 100K in debt due to his gambling. Gambler is in construction and daughter is a nurse. Caller does not know what type of gambling he does except that its at casinos. Gambler is in denial and does not want help. Caller was basically calling for financial help. Their mortgage payments are late but lender is willing to work it out with them. Other creditors are not that willing to work with them.

# [ Sample calls From HelpLine ]

- Caller is the mother of a 17 year old male gambler. Apparently he's been playing poker at local casinos but mother does not know which ones. He's been gambling for 2 years and she believes it's been a problem since last August. He dropped out of high school because of his gambling. He has been living with his dad since he dropped out of school and works as a day laborer earning \$8/hr. He has no debt except car insurance which he either pays late or father pays.

# [ Sample calls From HelpLine ]

- Caller was apprehensive about answering questions at first then he opened up and told me he is playing poker almost every night and he just lost his bill money for the month. He enters small tournaments and he always wins so he entered a big tournament and lost 5,000 in one night. He has lost about 10,000 since he started gambling, but he states he has won quite a few times. He is ready to stop the behavior and start thinking about his family more because he neglects them on a daily basis. He doesn't even know why his family is still around, sometimes he doesn't come home for a few days if he is in a tournament.

# [ Sample Calls From HelpLine ]

- Male caller who is highly suicidal due to his problems. He has been gambling for a few years and it has been a problem for about 8 months. During that time he has lost over \$75,000 and now his house is in foreclosure due to non-payment. His wife left him about a month ago. They tried to reconcile but he could not stay away from the gambling so she left him again for good this time. Very depressed individual who can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. He has seriously considered taking his life over the last 48 hours and the only thing that helped him was a friend that lives close by. He is sick of feeling this way and is ready to get help. His friend is willing to help him get into an inpatient treatment program.

## Contact Information

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Altamonte Springs, FL 32714

24-Hour HelpLine:  
888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848)  
Office: 407-865-6200

Email: [fccg@gamblinghelp.org](mailto:fccg@gamblinghelp.org)

Web site: [www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)

Web site features an online forum – check it out!