



# MCPG

Maryland Council on Problem Gambling

## **DIFFERENT FACES OF GAMBLING**

*Maria and her husband Salvador began making the hour-long drive to the casinos in the mountains of Colorado shortly after the casinos opened. The novelty soon wore off for Salvador, but not for Maria. She continued going to the casinos several evenings a week. Despite their modest income of \$3,000 a month, she managed to lose twice that much in less than a year. Salvador took most of the money out of the couple's joint checking account and opened his own bank account. And he told Maria that unless she got help, he would have to file for divorce (American Gaming Association).*

Unfortunately, divorce is just one of the possible consequences of problem gambling. Many reasons for gambling among multicultural communities are quite similar to mainstream culture. However, there are also factors which distinguish multicultural groups. Experts have learned that cultural communities may have an increased risk for problem gambling. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, people from varying multicultural backgrounds gamble to:

- socialize
- escape problems and isolation, such as poverty, financial stress, health, and emotional discomfort
- socialize with fellow members of cultural groups
- recapture social status
- celebrate religious festivals

This fact sheet outlines several minority groups but it is not an exhaustive list Children of Asian culture are taught to play the game Mahjong or Fan Tan which is a traditional and simple pebble counting game. Rates of Asian gambling range from 6 percent to nearly 60 percent. Asians promote themes of good fortune, are superstitious and feel fate is predetermined by their ancestors. (Timothy Fong, Psychology Today, 2014) “We have a

saying in Chinese if you don't gamble, you don't know how lucky you are," Anonymous Chinese gambler.

African-Americans historically used "numbers running," to take care of the family, but also enjoyed the lottery, scratch offs, video slot machines located in the community, casinos and the race track. (Haskins 2015 In Press .) "African-Americans may gamble for recreation and social reasons but often use gambling as a financial strategy to survive and escape structural barriers, such as unemployment and limited opportunities," commented Deborah G. Haskins, Ph.D., LCPC, NCGC-II, President, Maryland Council on Problem Gambling.

If you are a member of a multicultural community here are ways to help yourself and family members:

- get informed about problem gambling
- try not to hide a gambling problem
- find the right time to discuss the problem with a trusted person (pastor, family, friends, professional, self-help groups)
- call 1-800-Gambler (24-hour Confidential Crisis Hotline) and speaking with a trained counselor
- attend Gamblers Anonymous meetings--12-step self- help group  
[gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations](http://gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations) GA Help Line 855-222-5542 for Maryland and Northern Virginia
- seek professional help along with family support for yourself
- contact the Maryland Council on Problem Gambling  
[marylandproblemgambling.org](http://marylandproblemgambling.org)