



MCPG

Maryland Council on Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling's Affect on Lives and Finances

Problem gambling is any behavior that disrupts your life. Often people do not think that gambling can create problems for themselves but if not controlled, it can lead to financial ruin. You may even resort to theft in order to gamble more. People may also gamble as a financial strategy to support their daily life needs, including paying debts. Moreover, gambling has skyrocketed over the past several decades with more opportunities to do so through things like the lottery and scratch off games. Due to these expanded opportunities, citizens can gamble from the comfort of their homes using the Internet and also in many places within the community.

Problem gambling is also big business in the military. Some \$2 billion runs through military-owned slot machines, clubs sponsored by officers and bowling alleys each year. Most revenue is seen as winnings but 6 percent remains with the house which is about the equivalent ratio as in Las Vegas. Wartime is a time that makes the armed forces more vulnerable to gambling (Henriques Diana, New York Times 2005).

Gambling professionals often refer to gambling addiction as a hidden illness. This term is used for the following reasons: 1. Problem gamblers may attempt to hide their symptoms. 2. They may withdraw from their family members and lie about the time spent gambling. 3. Money put aside for debts may be used for gambling and can create a series of other problems because there simply isn't enough money left over. 4. Moreover when a problem gambler seeks treatment for physical or mental health often problem gambling is undiagnosed. A study of gambling disorders published in the Archives of Family Medicine found that 10 percent of all patients seeking primary health care met the benchmark for problem gambling. (NAPS)

But what can you do if gambling is being used for more than just social recreation? There are several suggestions:

- Attend support groups such as Gambler's Anonymous.
gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations
- Participate in cognitive behavior therapy which involves working with a psychotherapist to address unhealthy gambling behavior
- Call the 24-hour hotline 1-800-Gambler and speak with a trained counselor
- Associate with people that support your desire to reduce problem gambling. When tempted to gamble, attend a Gambler's Anonymous meeting.
gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations
GA Help line 855-222-5542 for Maryland and Northern Virginia
- Work with a financial counselor to manage your spending plan
- Contact the Maryland Council on Problem Gambling
marylandproblemgambling.org