



# SENIOR FOCUS

*Concerning Seniors with Gambling Problems*

VOLUME 3

888-ADMIT-IT

## About the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling

Hundreds of thousands of Floridians suffer from problem and compulsive gambling difficulties. Helping those individuals is the mission of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling as a not-for-profit educational and advocacy organization under contract with Florida state government.

For information call  
**888-ADMIT-IT**  
(888-236-4848)

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the FCCG 24-hour confidential HelpLine

**888-ADMIT-IT**  
(888-236-4848)

## Council on Aging President Expresses Concern



Max B. Rothman  
Board of Trustees President  
Florida Council on Aging

While attending a conference at a casino, Max B. Rothman, Executive Director of the Center on Aging at Florida International University in Miami and President of the Board of Trustees of the Florida Council on Aging, noticed that many of the gamblers were senior citizens. "No matter what time of day or night," he says now, "older adults, often alone, were always present in large numbers and this saddened me. It saddened me because many had no better place to go for fun and just didn't seem to be truly enjoying themselves."

Rothman isn't opposed to gambling and he recognizes that Florida's wide array of gambling options provides seniors with a form of entertainment

they value. "However," he explains, "there is an addictive quality to gambling that can hook some people and absolutely destroy their lives. With so many retirees in our state and so much time on their hands, it is becoming evident that the numbers of older adult problem gamblers is increasing rapidly.

In Rothman's opinion, Floridians should engage in a concerted effort to:

- Help seniors become aware of the hidden dangers of gambling
- Educate elder service providers about this issue
- Offer affordable and effective intervention and treatment services for older adult problem gamblers
- Furnish accessible and affordable recreational alternatives to entertain seniors

In conclusion, Rothman says, "Professionals who are members of the Florida Council on Aging are now first recognizing the potential dangers of excessive gambling and look forward to assisting and educating Floridians about this issue. Our members need to know as much as possible about prevention and treatment options for those with whom we work."

## Help for Seniors



An older adult problem gambling initiative is now being implemented in Orange, Seminole, Osceola and Brevard counties by the Senior Resource Alliance. In partnership with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, this program:

- Reaches out to educate the older adult community and service providers about problem gambling
- Screens older adults for gambling problems
- Refers qualified seniors 60 years and older to certified problem gambling counselors
- Provides free of charge up to five one hour counseling sessions for seniors diagnosed with a gambling problem
- Offers additional support services to older adult problem gamblers
- Provides support services for the caregivers 18 years and older

For more information, contact the Senior Resource Alliance triage unit at (407) 228-1800, Monday – Friday, 8 AM until 5 PM.

## Older Adult Gambling Can Lead to Shattered Lives

For most senior citizens, gambling can be an enjoyable way to pass the extra time provided by retirement and the empty nest of their later years. Unfortunately, for a sizeable portion of that aging population, the inability to stop betting causes catastrophic life disruptions. Bank accounts are emptied, huge debts acquired, homes lost and families shattered.

*“... the inability to stop betting causes catastrophic life disruptions...”*

When older adults get into that much trouble so late in life, it is very difficult to repair the damage. Unlike younger problem gamblers, senior citizens simply don't have the time to recoup their losses. Then with their backs to the wall financially and emotionally, these people find themselves impoverished, deeply depressed and even suicidal.

In Florida, we see this problem all the more clearly. Here our large older adult population serves as a prime target for seemingly endless gambling venues. A visit to any of the Sunshine State's bingo halls, Native American casinos, race tracks, jai-alai frontons or “cruises to nowhere” will prove just how successful the gaming industry's self-avowed marketing to the older generation really is. With such huge numbers of senior citizens participating at conveniently located gambling sites across the state, the amount of older adult problem

gamblers being created is more than disturbing.

*“Bank accounts are emptied, homes lost and families shattered”*

So what are people of conscience in Florida supposed to do about this situation? Of utmost importance is that elder gamblers, older adult service providers and others recognize the warning signs of a gambling problem highlighted on the back page of this newsletter. If you or someone you know is showing one or more of these signs call the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's 24-hour HelpLine at 888-ADMI-IT. Your call is completely confidential and will result in your receiving vital information that can help you address your particular circumstance. Waiting only prolongs the danger and even intensifies it. But if no one you know fits the profile, then please



share this newsletter with a friend, a relative or a colleague who might be in a position to help an older adult caught in the web of this terrifying illness.

# A Second Chance

I've got to keep my real name confidential, but for the purposes of this article you can call me Albert. You see, I'm a 60 year old compulsive gambler and it isn't easy going public with my story.

*"I almost destroyed my life"*

Oh, I stopped gambling long ago but I almost destroyed my life before finding Gamblers Anonymous (GA). You know, if I had kept on gambling instead of getting help, I would now either be dead or the loneliest, saddest person on this earth. In fact, there were times in my 26 years as a compulsive gambler when I hated who I was so much that I seriously thought about killing myself.

I started gambling by playing poker in the backroom of a barbershop and I was pretty good at it too. Won a lot of money sometimes and I could even go 40 hours at a time playing those cards. Can you believe it? But that wasn't enough, no sir. So, I started going to the dog track and wham! I was hooked. Dog racing ended up as my "game of choice" and win or lose, it really didn't matter as long as I could bet. Oh, I told myself it was all about the money, but it was really about the action. I wanted to be the big shot and live on the exciting edge of life. I must have looked pretty stupid! But that's



what compulsive gambling can do to you.

In the process, I lost my self respect, my home and almost lost my family. My wife and kids never saw me because I was always at the track. Finally my wife gave me an ultimatum. "Get help and stop gambling or get out," she said. I knew she was right but it took that kick in the rear to get me to GA. Thank God that happened. It wasn't easy at first, being an African-American in some of those almost all white meetings. But I found that as long as I was true to myself, it worked out great.

That first GA meeting was 18 years ago and I still attend several times a week. I have to so I don't slip and start gambling again. Besides, now I can help the new members coming into the program. I'm also especially concerned about senior citizens in Florida who don't realize how quickly they can get hooked on gambling and lose everything. My message to them is that if it happens to you, there really is help out there. It's never too late.

**Want to help? Join FCCG.**  
(Contributions are tax deductible)

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Membership Categories

Full	\$35
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Benefactor	\$150
Patron	\$500
Institution / Corporate	\$1,000
Silver Corporate	\$5,000
Special Gold Corporate	\$10,000
Donation	\$ _____

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling and mail to:

**Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling**  
237 Lookout Place, Suite 100  
Maitland, FL 32751

## Self-Help Workbooks for Senior Gamblers

*Available now!*  
*A Chance for Change*

Workbooks to help gamblers, older adult gamblers, and loved ones.



For information, call  
**888-236-4848.**

**FOR COMPULSIVE GAMBLERS, HELP STARTS HERE**  
**888-ADMIT-IT**





Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.  
237 Lookout Place, Suite 100  
Maitland, Florida 32751

Phone: (407) 865-6200  
Fax: (407) 865-6103  
HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT  
888-236-4848

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# WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

# 888-ADMIT-IT

 **Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.** [www.gamblinghelp.org](http://www.gamblinghelp.org)

## Problem Gambling Warning Signs Among Older Adults

- Being preoccupied with gambling
- Gambling to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression
- Needing to gamble increasing amounts of money to experience a thrill
- Withdrawing from family, friends or other activities
- Experiencing mood swings based on winnings and losses
- Neglecting personal needs or health in order to gamble
- Failing to pay electric, telephone or other bills on account of gambling
- Lying or being secretive when questioned about gambling habits
- Using retirement money or cashing in an insurance policy to fund gambling
- Pawning or selling personal possessions to gamble
- Expressing a sudden need for money or loans
- Making unsuccessful attempts to control or stop gambling
- Feeling depressed or having self-destructive thoughts due to gambling

If you identify one or more of these warning signs in yourself or someone else, gambling may be a problem. Call the FCCG's confidential Problem Gambling HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT.