



SENIOR FOCUS

Concerning Seniors with Gambling Problems

VOLUME 4

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)

Spreading the Word

For many years, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) has taken steps to advertise its 24-hour confidential HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT). The statewide HelpLine is free to anyone seeking information about, or support for, a gambling problem. Calls come in from many sources but they primarily originate from desperate gamblers, worried loved ones, friends and even employers of gamblers in trouble. They call because they need help for themselves or others.

Nearly 20% of all HelpLine contacts involve older adult gamblers, of which one-third are minorities. Despite cultural differences amongst seniors, the top three gambling problems reported were slot machines, cards and lottery games. The main reasons older adults call for assistance are overextended debt, relationship difficulties and substantial financial loss.

The **888-ADMIT-IT** number gets into the hands of callers in varied ways, the most prominent of which include FCCG billboards on Florida highways, gambling facility referrals (see related story on page 2), the Internet, the phone book, lottery points of purchase, or a family member or friend. In its effort to spread the word, the FCCG continually works to promote the HelpLine in any way possible.

Now the FCCG is asking you to become part of this effort. We need your help in placing the **888-ADMIT-IT**

number before as many people as possible. Here are just a few ideas:

- Keep the **888-ADMIT-IT** number handy in your mind or in your wallet so you can offer it to someone who mentions a gambling problem.
- Call **888-ADMIT-IT** and order free posters, brochures or promotional items for distribution or postings at your workplace, school, house of faith, community group, condo or apartment complex.



- If any organization you know is going to use gambling to fundraise, contact the FCCG for HelpLine signs to alert players to the number. Together we can make a difference.

Special Considerations for the Elder Gambler

Gambling is an attractive pastime for many elders who often have few activities available that offer the same excitement or appeal. With easy access and associated perks, Florida's over 55 set is driven to gamble by several factors, including loneliness and boredom. Unfortunately, when seniors become addicted, the effects can be far more devastating than their younger counterparts. Particular challenges include:

- Using gambling to adjust to the onset of retirement or other life changes and loss.
- Attempting to recoup gambling losses late in life.
- Failing to physically and emotionally care for self.
- Isolating from others and trying to manage without help.
- Losing financial independence.

The good news is that problem gambling is treatable.

For information and
assistance, call or
visit us online:

24-Hour Confidential
HelpLine

888-ADMIT-IT

(888-236-4848)

www.gamblinghelp.org

Slot Machines and Responsible Gambling

Last year, Broward County residents approved having slot machines at certain locations. Soon, 1,500 slots will be ready for action at each of the County's racetracks and jai alai facilities.

According to research, slot machines can be highly addictive given their rapid cycle and continuous nature of play, and when bettors start, it can be difficult for some to walk away. Timeframes for a problem to develop are also much shorter with slots than other traditional gambling forms.

Consistently, Broward County residents place the largest number of calls to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's (FCCG) 24-hour HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT). Statewide, and in Broward County, slot machines are the primary gambling problem identified by callers. HelpLine data also reveals that slots are the number one gambling choice among seniors. When adding Broward's large elder population to this mix, it could spell danger.

*"Timeframes for a
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gambling forms."*

In recognition of these potential negative impacts, the state of Florida has issued proposed regulations requiring Broward's designated facilities to implement plans to assist patrons who encounter gambling difficulties. The FCCG has developed the Responsible Gaming and Player Protection Program (RGPPP) for use in gaming facilities in Florida, based upon nearly two decades

working with industry members. The FCCG believes its new program will help to reduce some of the risks to seniors and others, and anticipates partnering with gaming operators on this important initiative.

The RGPPP helps gaming establishments develop their own unique policies to combat problem gambling. It also trains employees to spot people who show signs of wagering difficulties

RESPONSIBLE GAMING AND PLAYER PROTECTION PROGRAM

Facility, Employee and
Train-the-Trainer Modules



Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.
24-Hour HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT
Website: www.gamblinghelp.org

and to understand how this behavior affects the lives of gamblers, their families and others. Once identified, employees provide problem gamblers with a helpline number where they can call for assistance. Patrons can also opt to exclude themselves from betting in the future at these facilities.

Early detection by knowledgeable and skilled employees can help problem gamblers and when their betting behavior declines, everyone stands to win.

www.gamblinghelp.org

Kidnapped by Gambling

How does an older adult get hooked on gambling? For me it was frighteningly easy. Maybe it goes back to when I was a kid and couldn't play cards without betting. Nevertheless, what's certain is that soon after my husband of 38 years died, I had become a compulsive gambler.

I think grief, loneliness and boredom are what started it all. I just wanted to have some fun so I went to the nearby dog track, had dinner and bet a little. Well, I got bored with that and very quickly graduated to the poker tables right there at the track and then eventually went on to the casinos and gambling ships. In the end though, it was the slots I couldn't resist. I became so addicted to those machines I played them seven days a week and even up to two days at a time. It was crazy. Gambling actually kidnapped me and held me hostage for a scary seven years.

"... it was the slots I couldn't resist."

Besides doing nothing but gamble, I alienated myself from my family

and almost lost all the assets my husband and I had built up over the years. I won't tell you how much money went down the drain because the number is truly obscene. What had begun as an innocent pastime at the track turned into a real horror.

"Honey, you've been losing too much"

Finally, my daughter confronted me one day: "Mom, you've got a problem," she said. "I can never find you at home, you are losing all your money and your personality is changing for the worse." When I heard those words, I knew she was right. Just days before a casino employee had also confronted me. Instead of cashing my big check that night, the cashier pointed to a sign behind her on the wall and said, "Honey, you've been losing too much. You need to make a call." The sign was an advertisement alerting people where to get help for a gambling problem.

She and my daughter were so right. That was seven years ago and I've been in Gambler's Anonymous (GA) ever since. Without it, I would have



lost everything. Now I have my life back. These days, instead of gambling, I volunteer to answer the GA Helpline. When gamblers call in, I steer them right to a meeting. It makes me feel so good because I know where those poor souls have been and where they are going without help.

Help for Senior Service Providers

Want to educate your clients about problem gambling? Yours for the asking, a "Playing It Safe" kit contains:

- A detailed presentation guide on CD
- Brochures
- Senior Focus newsletters
- Bookmarks
- "Safe Money" – play money for seniors with problem gambling warning signs and protective gambling tips on the back
- HelpLine promotional items

Call 888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848) to order your free "Playing It Safe" kit.



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



Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.
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Phone: (407) 865-6200
Fax: (407) 865-6103
HelpLine: 888-ADMIT-IT
(888-236-4848)

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WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

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www.gamblinghelp.org

Problem Gambling Warning Signs Among Older Adults

- 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
- Difficulty accounting for blocks of time spent
- Mood swings based on winnings and losses
- Neglecting personal needs or health
- Failing to pay electric, telephone or other bills
- Lying or being secretive when questioned about gambling habits
- Using retirement money or cashing in an insurance policy to fund gambling
- Missing possessions or assets, including pawning or selling personal items
- Having a sudden need for money or loans
- Unable to control or stop gambling
- Feeling depressed or having self-destructive thoughts

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**.