

Problem Gambling News Special Edition

VOLUME 29

MAY, 2011

Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling
24-HOUR HELPLINE: 888-ADMIT-IT (888-236-4848)

Setting the Record Straight: Opinion vs. Fact

Just the Facts:

- As of 2011, there are in excess of 600 Internet Cafés in Florida.
- During 2009-2010, 2.6% (68) of all calls to the statewide 24-hour Problem Gambling HelpLine were received from persons seeking help due to problems with Internet Centers. Within the first 10 months of FY 2010-2011, calls rose to 4% (96) of all contacts.
- Primary calls were from residents in Duval, Volusia, Brevard, and Orange counties; areas without major gambling facilities.
- Nearly 80% of these gamblers were female, the vast majority of whom were Caucasian or African American.
- The largest percentage of gamblers were ages 40 and older, with primary calls from persons 40-49 years, followed by seniors 55 and older, and those ages 50-54. There was a tri-fold increase in calls from gamblers ages 26-30 between FY 09-10 to July 2010-April 2011.
- More than 25% of these gamblers were unemployed or disabled, and 15% were retired.
- Almost 80% reported difficulties paying bills, more than 40% were pawning or selling assets, upwards of one-third were using savings, equity or retirement funds, and an equal number were engaging in illegal acts, to pay off debts or to continue gambling.

Recently, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) was asked to distinguish between opinions and facts on the issue of Internet Sweepstakes Centers, also known as Internet Cafés and Internet Centers, per the Agency's April 2011 online newsletter.

FCCG's Opinion:

It is the FCCG's professional opinion that Internet Sweepstakes Centers meet the definition of gambling, which requires a person spend money or risk another item of value on an uncertain outcome or event. This determination is based upon more than 20 years of expertise in the field, coupled with serving as the State's designated advocate on problem gambling and as operator of Florida's 24-Hour crisis HelpLine.

Fact - Internet Centers Cause Gambling Problems

The FCCG's concern about Internet cafés is in response to calls to our 24-Hour HelpLine. Florida residents are reporting problems similar to other forms of gambling. Increased calls this fiscal year document this point. (Read entire newsletter.)

Legal Status

While many Internet Cafés are licensed within counties, they are not subject to the same requirements that gambling facilities are in the state. In fact, some local law enforcement authorities have deemed these businesses illegal and have closed down operations.



24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Facts

- More than 80% of all HelpLine callers experiencing difficulties with Internet Centers reported feelings of depression, anxiety (over 75%), family conflict (nearly 70%) or neglect (more than 50%).
- Over 15% of these contacts admitted to having suicidal thoughts or attempting suicide.
- The average gambling debt was more than 50% of the gamblers' average earnings.
- Callers reported difficulties avoiding Internet Cafés, since these establishments are located in strip malls by other stores they frequent.

**Gambling Problem?
Call 888-ADMIT-IT**

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