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The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling Urges Health Care Professionals to Screen for Disordered Gambling

Sanford, FL – National Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) launches on March 1st and the National Council on Problem Gambling has declared Tuesday, March 12th as Gambling Disorder Screening Day across the United States. Here in the Sunshine State, in addition to a series of planned outreach activities with local and statewide organizations, academic institutions, mayors, gaming operators, and others, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is urging mental health, addiction, and other health care professionals to conduct preliminary assessments on their patients for disordered gambling on March 12th and throughout the month whenever possible.

“All too often when patients visit mental health clinics, doctors’ offices, emergency rooms, and elsewhere, practitioners routinely screen for tobacco, alcohol and substance use and abuse, but do not typically take steps to assess whether someone is experiencing difficulties due to gambling,” explained Jennifer Kruse, Executive Director of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG). Disordered gambling, commonly referred to as compulsive or problem gambling, is known as the hidden addiction, because those who suffer do not exhibit any outward visible signs. However, problem gamblers frequently experience a range of difficulties, including but not limited to physical and emotional issues, yet the root cause of their symptoms is rarely attributed to gambling because the topic is not discussed and is therefore overlooked.

The Lie-Bet Questionnaire consists of two questions which enable clinicians to quickly determine whether a client may be struggling with a gambling problem. If a patient responds “Yes” to one or both of the following questions, further assessment is warranted.

1. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
2. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?

The FCCG operates its 24-hour confidential and multilingual HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT), which provides an array of resources ranging from supportive intervention to free treatment for Florida residents. The HelpLine also offers information, materials, and training opportunities for health care professionals, diverse types of organizations, and others.

In instances when patients respond “Yes” to one or both Lie-Bet questions, they should be directed to call the HelpLine for additional assessment and services, all of which are free to Florida residents. Preliminarily screening clients and referring them to the HelpLine will assure they receive comprehensive assessment and treatment services from trained and certified professionals. The FCCG is under state contract and is the only organization of its kind providing statewide supports to this population.

The FCCG also furnishes training opportunities to practitioners seeking certification in disordered gambling treatment and utilizes its network of providers to offer free treatment to residents statewide. Any professional interested in becoming a Recovery Path Provider should call the HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT) or write to PGAM@gamblinghelp.org for additional information or materials. For more information on Problem Gambling Awareness Month, visit problemgamblingawarenessmonth.org.