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The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling Announces Problem Gambling Awareness Month in Florida

Sanford, FL – Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) launches on March 1st and the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is conducting a statewide campaign, *Play it Safe – So the Game Doesn't Take Control of You*, to alert people of all ages, as well as parents, that online video gaming has many of the same characteristics as gambling addiction and deserves widespread attention.

According to Jennifer Kruse, the FCCG's Executive Director, "Like gambling opportunities, for most gamers, video games are recreational in nature and do not lead to serious consequences. Yet, for some, the desire to play becomes uncontrollable, placing players at risk for damaging their financial, physical, and mental health. Moreover, while many of these games start out for free, continued play requires payment, leading many to transition to other online forms of gambling. Exacerbating matters further, parents and others are often unaware of the activities children are participating in when online, yet this warrants attention."

While the FCCG's newly released PGAM brochure focuses on gambling behavior in video games, it provides responsible "gaming" principles that apply to games of all kinds, including traditional forms of gambling. Readers are encouraged to be mindful of the purpose and frequency of in-game purchases, which are often ineligible for refunds. Being attentive to the time and money spent engaging in these games can also help players self-assess whether they may be experiencing difficulties. The brochure further outlines problem gambling warning signs and encourages those who may be struggling from issues related to gambling to contact the FCCG's 24-7 Confidential, Multilingual, Problem Gambling HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT.

"Disordered gambling is a psychiatric condition defined by the American Psychiatric Association. However, there is still a lack of understanding that people who struggle with gambling problems need help, as do alcoholics and drug addicts. Problem Gambling Awareness Month occurs in March because this is also when March Madness is underway. So, it is important to keep in mind that sports betting creates substantial problems for many people, young and old, and results in billions of dollars being spent nationally, yet it is illegal here in the Sunshine State and in most other states across the country," added Kruse.

The FCCG is among more than 30 state affiliates of the National Council on Problem Gambling, who declared March as the official awareness month nationwide. The FCCG is doing its part to spread the word about its 24-hour statewide confidential and multilingual HelpLine, 888-ADMIT-IT, which offers information, supportive intervention, population-specific materials, and resource referrals, including free treatment to Florida residents (gamblers and loved ones).

"The FCCG is working with Mayors, libraries and community-based organizations throughout the state to help residents understand that recovery from a gambling addiction is possible for those who seek help. Anyone interested in joining the FCCG in this awareness campaign or desires additional information, including a copy of the newest PGAM brochure, can call our HelpLine anytime or visit our PGAM website at problemgamblingawarenessmonth.org," Kruse concluded.