

Web Letter



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Gambling in the Metaverse Does Not Change the Reality for Getting Help in Florida

You may have heard the word “metaverse” floating around with the promise of being the next frontier, but what exactly is this new digital world? The term was originally coined in Neal Stephenson’s 1992 novel *Snow Crash*, where he gave us a first look into his imagined metaverse, a place where users put on virtual reality goggles and adopted an avatar to navigate through a digital world. We can only assume that when Stephenson coined this phrase, he had no idea how this technological advancement he dreamt of could impact the lives of those at risk of problem gambling.

Thirty years later, we’re seeing a digital world where users can gamble, shop, socialize, work, play and more — and it all hinges on the user feeling as if they are truly in the perceived reality.^[1] Currently, we know that the brain produces maps based upon sight, sound and smell and Virtual Reality (VR) alters the brain’s processes. So, with the newness of this alternative universe, a concern is how the brain’s connections will affect gamblers, as well as problem gamblers. For this reason, it’s essential we remain vigilant to the lure of problem gambling in the metaverse and identify approaches that will work best to establish a statutory framework, as well as regulations to protect those who are at-risk of developing compulsive gambling and other habitual behaviors.

Referred to in one article as a “regulatory wild west,” gambling in the metaverse serves as a much more immersive version of online gambling where users feel as if they’re truly in a casino or similar location.^[2] As the line between real and imagined blur, participants can place bets using nontraditional currencies, such as digital currencies. While this method provides a certain level of privacy to the user, at the same time the lack of regulatory framework and volatility of the currency used makes placing bets in this online environment risky.



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Now that Virtual Reality is upon us, users of all financial backgrounds need to approach this new technology with caution. **While the metaverse isn't a real place, it can have very real impacts on the lives of problem gamblers and their loved ones.** Moving forward, there are many questions that need answers as they relate to gambling on this platform, much like online gambling which remains unlawful in the Sunshine State, both require strict regulatory oversight and provisions.

Policymakers must also keep in mind that any expansion of gambling in the state, via Virtual Reality or otherwise, will necessitate requirements be put in place to fund and support prevention, education, outreach, research, and treatment programs and services for those at risk of problem gambling and for those adversely affected. *Your One Sure Thing*, however, in Florida, is knowing that help and hope are a reality for anyone struggling from difficulties due to gambling by contacting the 24/7 **888-ADMIT-IT** Confidential & Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine.

References:

1. Welsh, Oli. "The Metaverse, Explained." *Polygon*, 6 Mar. 2022, <https://www.polygon.com/22959860/metaverse-explained-video-games>.
 2. Baker, Katherine, and Kelly Hogan. "Metaverse Casinos: A Regulatory Wild West." *The National Law Review*, 29 Sept. 2022, <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/metaverse-casinos-regulatory-wild-west#:~:text=The%20metaverse%20has%20become%20a,estate%2C%20including%20an%20entire%20casino>.
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Contact FCCG's confidential and multilingual 24/7 Problem Gambling HelpLine:

Phone: 888-ADMIT-IT

Text: 321-978-0555

Email: fccg@gamblinghelp.org

Live Chat: gamblinghelp.org

Tap into the 888-ADMIT-IT App or reach out on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

