

Gambling & Problem Gambling in the Sunshine State

- Gambling Disorder is a psychiatric condition with a behavioral addiction diagnosis, introduced in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders fifth edition (DSM-5), and recognized as a diagnosable and treatable illness by the American Psychiatric Association.
- Florida's casino gambling market includes 7 tribal casinos offering Class II and III style gaming (6 operated by the Seminole Tribe and 1 operated by the Miccosukee tribe), 38 pari-mutuel facilities offering jai-alai or racing, cardrooms (no banked card games), and slots (slots only offered at 8 designated "Racinos" offering slot machine gaming in Broward and Miami-Dade counties). Additional gambling opportunities that are vast and varied are provided through thousands of lottery retailers and numerous other gambling facilities across the state, such as adult arcades, day/floating casinos, bingo halls, and illegal gambling operations.
- In 2022, Florida made the list of top 20 commercial casino gaming markets in the United States, with Miami-Dade County coming in at #18 and reporting record revenue growth this year compared to previous year records (and reflecting an increase of 90.3% since 2020). Total statewide commercial casino gambling revenues from the 8 state of Florida slot-licensed racinos/casinos amounted to \$694.0 million, reflecting a 6.9% increase from the prior year period [AGA, 2023]. The Florida Lottery was the nation's top grossing lottery in 2021, with Lottery sales rising to an all-time high of \$9.08 billion (an increase from \$7.51 billion in 2020), and the purchases of scratch-off tickets increasing by \$1.16 billion to \$6.8 billion. Based upon considerable past research, there is little doubt that gambling in Florida will continue to grow and that an identifiable group of individuals and their loved ones will be negatively impacted due to gambling.
- Expansion of gambling necessitates the creation of a public health framework that will ensure that regardless of platform type, all forms of gambling will meet certain statutory requirements to include evidence-based responsible gambling measures and consumer protections to mitigate harm. Given the proliferation of gambling across the state of Florida, we must expand our efforts to recognize and mitigate, to the extent possible, the adverse impact of compulsive and addictive gambling behaviors on individuals, families, and communities by requiring participation from ALL Gambling Operators, in Florida's compulsive and addictive gambling behavior prevention program.
- According to the National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services (NAADGS), Florida ranked 34th out of 42 states in the US with specifically funded problem gambling services in 2021. The Per Capita Average across the U.S. was \$0.40; Florida's per capita public funding allocation for problem gambling services was \$0.06.
- As sports wagering and other forms and venues of gambling become available, additional financial supports for problem gambling programs and supports provided through the 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine, as well as necessary funds to monitor and research changing patterns of gambling should be allocated. Since internet searches and gambling facility signage continued to dominate how contacts reported learning about the FCCG HelpLine, all gambling operators, regardless of platform type, should be required to support and promote the 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine. Currently, in Florida, only the 8 FGCC slot-licensed racinos are required to post such notification.
- Based upon national prevalence rates of disordered gambling of 1.2% (Williams, Volberg & Stevens, 2012), and U.S. Census Bureau estimates of persons aged 18 and over in Florida, approximately 210,000 individuals have a significant gambling problem in Florida. Considerable evidence exists that problem gamblers negatively impact between 8-10 additional other people (spouses, family members, employers, etc.). The fact that many problem gamblers fail to seek out necessary supports, experience significant concomitant mental health and familial problems, and are involved in criminal behaviors is of concern. These results all point to the importance of the FCCG's 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine as an essential support for problem gamblers, their families and the mental health community.

FCCG Background

- The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) independent corporation, with a primary mission to:
 - ✓ Increase public awareness regarding the risks and consequences associated with gambling;
 - ✓ Provide referral assistance to problem gamblers, their families and others adversely affected;
 - ✓ Advocate for problem gambling programs, services and other supports to address population-specific needs.
- The FCCG operates the 24-hour confidential and multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine, 888-ADMIT-IT, where problem gambling help, information, programs, literature, supportive intervention, referrals, resources, and a breadth of related supports, are provided to Florida citizens in need of help with a gambling problem, 24 hours per day, 365 days of the year.
- In addition to operating the HelpLine, the FCCG also provides expert training for gambling industry operators, mental health treatment providers, and others interested in reducing gambling-related harms, to assure gamblers and their families, and those adversely affected, a one-stop resource where they can obtain the help needed to recover from a gambling disorder and resume a healthier lifestyle.
- The FCCG maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling while also seeking to assist citizens in need of problem gambling specific supports.