



Problem Gambling: Have the Conversation in March

Everyone Probably Knows Someone With A Gambling Problem: Who Will You Talk To?

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Washington, DC March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month and this year's theme is "*Problem Gambling: Have the Conversation.*" Six to eight million Americans meet criteria for gambling addiction, and many more are affected by an individual's gambling problem. Signs of problem gambling include becoming restless or irritable when trying to stop or cut down on gambling; lying about gambling to loved ones; and developing financial problems due to gambling. Gambling disorders are associated with a wide range of problems, including depression, domestic violence, bankruptcy, substance abuse and suicide.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), the non-profit advocate for programs to help problem gamblers and their families, created and sponsors this grassroots campaign. The goal of Problem Gambling Awareness Month is to educate the public and healthcare professionals about the warning signs of problem gambling and promote the availability of help and hope both locally and nationally. NCPG Executive Director Keith Whyte states "over the past decade the availability of gambling has skyrocketed but acceptance of gambling addiction as a serious public health concern has lagged."

NCPG President Maureen Greeley, who serves as Executive Director of the Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling, adds "the goal of our special awareness month is to help harness the energy of myriad advocacy efforts to shine a focused spotlight on this important issue across the country."

The *Have the Conversation* theme can be utilized in many different settings. Addiction and mental health counselors should screen for gambling disorders, which would lead them to *Have the Conversation* with their clients. Family members can *Have the Conversation* with loved ones who show signs of gambling disorders. Individuals who find that gambling causes negative consequences in their life can *Have the Conversation* with loved ones or their healthcare providers which is the first step towards change. Legislators, regulators and gaming operators can *Have the Conversation* with problem gambling advocates like NCPG and its 36 State Affiliate chapters to better understand how to minimize harm.

Gambling revenue and participation is at an all-time high. Gambling disorders are too devastating to individuals and society to allow to go unnoticed and unattended. So we all need to *Have the Conversation*. More information on how to participate in Problem Gambling Awareness Month can be found at www.npgam.org.

To get help for a gambling problem, for you or a loved one, call 1-800-522-4700. The call is free and confidential.

NCPG is the national advocate for problem gamblers and their families. NCPG is neutral on legalized gambling and leads state and national stakeholders in the development of comprehensive policy and programs for all those affected by problem gambling. Our vision is to improve health and wellness by reducing the personal, social and economic costs of problem gambling.

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