



March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Awareness Plus Action Needed as Sports Betting Explodes

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Washington, DC – The [National Council on Problem Gambling](#) (NCPG) designates March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM). March Madness, the annual NCAA basketball tournament that sees over \$8 billion wagered on its games, is the backdrop that NCPG and its partners across the country leverage to help raise awareness and create action for those suffering from gambling problems.

With the campaign now in its nineteenth year, contacts to the [National Problem Gambling Helpline](#) typically spike during March. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2018 that states could allow sports betting, the proverbial floodgates opened. As we go to press, [sports betting](#) is now legal and operational in 20 states plus the District of Columbia, with many more considering it – an unprecedented expansion of gambling in the U.S. Unfortunately, services to mitigate the inevitable increase in harms associated with gambling have not kept pace.

"March Madness is a time of year when we see an increase in gambling and more demand for our services," said Keith Whyte, Executive Director of NCPG. "Too many people still don't recognize they are exhibiting signs of this addictive behavior and are unaware of the help that is available to them."

The PGAM grassroots campaign brings together a wide range of stakeholders, among them public health organizations, advocacy groups including NCPG state affiliates, and even gambling operators. NCPG provides a special web page to give information on local state activities and events – participants may share them via a link on our main webpage: <https://www.ncpgambling.org/programs-resources/programs/pgam/>

Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) is designed to achieve two goals:

- To increase public awareness of problem gambling; and
- To encourage healthcare providers to screen clients for gambling problems.

On NCPG's PGAM webpage visitors are provided with materials and special graphics in the PGAM Toolkit, which can be used without charge by any organization that wants to hold advocacy and awareness activities this March. Each year, hundreds of organizations do. The social media hashtags for this initiative are **#AwarenessPlusAction** and **#PGAM2021**.

NCPG also collaborates with [Cambridge Health Alliance](#) (CHA) on [Gambling Disorder Screening Day](#), which occurs on March 9, 2021. CHA, a nonprofit health organization headquartered in Cambridge,

Massachusetts, hosts the international event that has been held annually on the second Tuesday in March since 2014. It is designed to encourage health care providers to screen for gambling problems in the same way they do for alcohol and drug use disorder or domestic abuse, and to provide the tools to recognize gambling disorder for both the public and health care providers. All too often, this disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational and physical harms, yet many cases go undetected due to the limited availability of accessible assessments to identify this problem. The Screening Day addresses the issue and provides tools to identify gambling-related problems as early as possible.

Whyte said, “Problem gambling is certainly not confined to sports betting. We want anyone who may have a problem with any form of gambling to know that they don’t have to suffer in silence.” NCPG’s National Helpline, which is the only helpline for gambling that works in all 50 states, is tollfree, confidential, available 24/7, and offers translation services in 178 languages. It receives no federal funding and is supported only by NCPG’s members and donors.

About the National Council on Problem Gambling

Based in Washington DC, the National Council on Problem Gambling is the only national nonprofit organization that seeks to minimize the economic and social costs associated with gambling addiction. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, contact the National Problem Gambling Helpline, which offers hope and help without stigma or shame. Call or text 1-800-522-4700 or visit www.ncpgambling.org/chat. Help is available 24/7 – it is free and confidential.

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