



Virginia Council on Problem Gambling Reminds Super Bowl Viewers about the Risks of Wagering on the Big Game

On Feb. 11, 2024, people across the country will be watching the action on Super Bowl LVIII, the most wagered-upon sporting event in the U.S. Millions are planning to get a piece of the action by placing a bet on the big game.

The American Gambling Association estimates that more than \$16 billion (yes, billion!) in bets will be placed on this year's Super Bowl.

The massive expansion of gambling options nationwide now means that 38 states (up from 37 in 2023), including Virginia, plus Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, currently offer some form of legal sports betting. Mobile sports betting is legal in 30 states, up from 28 in 2023.

With the legalization of sports betting and as access to gambling has expanded in the Commonwealth, the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling's (VCPG) helpline, 1-888-532-3500, has seen a shift in the age of callers to a much younger demographic who are developing problems at a faster rate.

"People are starting to develop problems very quickly due to the onset of sports betting legalization along with the growth in options for sports betting," said Dr. Carolyn Hawley, President of VCPG. "The speed, the repetitive nature, and the rush of adrenaline from betting works with the dopamine neurotransmitters and can accelerate the addictive process."

Dr. Hawley added, "As friends and families gather to participate in one of the biggest sports wagering events of the year, we want to remind people of the risks involved with gambling. If you have a friend or loved one who can be a victim of temptation to indulge in sports betting, discuss a plan to help them cope with the triggers that can creep up before Super Bowl Sunday. Also, before you place a bet on the big game, know your limits. For those who are experiencing problems, we can help."

Virginians are encouraged to consider the following tips to help keep gambling fun:

- **Know the Game:** Understand the odds and house edge. Over the long run, the house always wins.
- **Make a Plan:** Know how much money you are willing to lose and how long you want to play. Set limits of time and money.
- **Risk:** Know and respect your tolerance for risk.

- Money: Never borrow money to gamble, and don't gamble money you cannot afford to lose.
- Team Up: Consider teaming up with a friend to help each other stick to your personal betting plan.
- Time: Set a timer on your phone to keep track of time spent betting.
- Balance: Balance gambling with other activities.
- Entertainment: Treat gambling as a form of entertainment and not a way to make money.
- Take a Break: When gambling turns from fun to frustrating, take a break.
- Expect to Lose: Hope to win but expect to lose. Remember, you are playing to have a good time. Never chase your losses.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, the Council offers a confidential toll-free helpline. Please call or text 1-888-532-3500 or visit vcpg.net to chat online.