



VIRGINIA COUNCIL on PROBLEM GAMBLING
knowledge | strength | support

Problem Gambling Awareness Month Spotlights Resources for Support & Recovery

- Calls to Virginia Council on Problem Gambling’s helpline spiked 973% from 2019-2023
- VCPG connected 29% of callers directly to a problem gambling treatment provider
- Support is available 24/7/365 at VCPG’s free, confidential helpline: 1-888-532-3500

Richmond, Va. (March 1, 2024) – The [Virginia Council on Problem Gambling \(VCPG\)](#), in collaboration with the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), recognizes March as **Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM)**. PGAM is dedicated to increasing public awareness of problem gambling and the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery services.

Problem gambling is defined as all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family, or vocational pursuits. Approximately 2 million U.S. adults (1% of the population) are estimated to meet the criteria for severe problem gambling. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) meet the criteria for mild or moderate problem gambling.

PGAM is designed to coincide each year with March Madness, when many Americans will take advantage of the expansion of legal online wagering. For the majority of adults, gambling can be a fun and entertaining experience, but there are risks involved. Sports bettors are at particularly high-risk for developing a gambling problem. According to the National Survey on Gambling Attitudes and Gambling Experiences 2.0, four out of five sports bettors reported often needing to gamble more and more over time to achieve the same feeling of excitement.

“As gambling options have increased, Virginians have become more at risk for developing issues with problem gambling,” said Dr. Carolyn Hawley, President of VCPG. “Calls to the Virginia Problem Gambling Helpline have increased exponentially over the past five years, spiking 973% between 2019 and 2023.”

Some highlights from the VCPG’s [2023 Annual Report](#) include:

- In 2023 alone, 10,608 calls were made to the VCPG’s free 24-hour helpline, representing a 20% growth in call volume from 8,780 calls in 2022.
- VCPG connected 29% of callers directly to a problem gambling treatment provider.
- Gambling at slot machines at casinos or the track was cited as the #1 type of gambling activity that callers had engaged in, followed by sports betting and skill games.
- Prominent financial ramifications from the callers’ experiences with problem gambling included spending all their extra money or savings, being late on bills, borrowing from friends/family, and incurring additional credit card debt.

“Problem Gambling Awareness Month promotes essential awareness for individuals affected by problem gambling, as well as their loved ones,” said Dr. Hawley. “The VCPG stands behind initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility to prevention, treatment, and recovery services. Support for problem gambling remains readily available in Virginia, not only during March but throughout the entire year.”

The Virginia Problem Gambling Helpline, **1-888-532-3500**, is a free, 24/7/365 service that refers callers to peer recovery specialists who are experienced in gambling and/or substance use. These specialists can answer questions, provide support and direct callers to valuable resources in their geographic area. The helpline is easily accessible by call, text or even by online chat at vcpg.net. All callers who allow follow-up calls receive regular contacts via phone, text and email after 48 hours, one week, one month and six months.

“As our state’s legislature continues to make multiple new forms of gambling legal and easier than ever to access, it’s important for Virginians to be aware of the [signs of problem gambling](#), whether it’s for themselves or someone they know,” concluded Dr. Hawley. “We want anyone who might be struggling with a gambling disorder to know that we can help.”

“The work done by the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling is vital now more than ever for the Commonwealth,” said Virginia Lottery Interim Executive Director Tony Russell. “The Virginia Lottery for many years has been proud to partner with the VCPG to help raise awareness of problem gambling and resources available in Virginia that can help.”

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About VCPG:

The Virginia Council on Problem Gambling (VCPG) aims to increase the well-being of Virginians impacted by gambling. The Council accomplishes this through raising public awareness of problem gambling, communicating that help is available for problem gamblers and their families, and providing research and programs for prevention and education. VCPG maintains a neutral stance on gambling and is the only nonprofit in Virginia dedicated to this issue. The Council exists solely through membership support. If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, please call or text 1-888-532-3500 or visit vcpg.net to chat online.

Annual members of the VCPG are committed to supporting safer gambling practices and services for problem gamblers and their families. Current Platinum-level Members include Caesar’s Entertainment, Draftkings, Fanduel Group and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Bristol. Barstool Sports/Penn National Gaming, Inc. and the Virginia Lottery are Gold-level Members. Colonial Downs Racetrack is a Bronze-level Member. Local Community Service Board (CSB) Members include the Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck CSB, Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services, Hopestarter Rappahannock Area CSB, Northwestern CSB, Loudoun County CSB, and Prince William Community Services.

About the National Council on Problem Gambling:

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is the only national nonprofit organization in the US that seeks to mitigate gambling-related harm. NCPG is neutral on legalized gambling. 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. US and Canadian users can call 1-800-GAMBLER, text 800GAM, or visit www.1800gamblerchat.org. Help is available 24/7 – it is free and confidential.