



## **Problem Gambling Awareness Month in March 2026 to Focus on Community-Driven Approach for Awareness and Support**

- Calls to Virginia Council on Problem Gambling's helpline increased **39% in 2025**
- VCPG connected 1,508 callers directly to a problem gambling treatment provider
- Support is available 24/7/365 via call or text to VCPG's free helpline: **1-888-532-3500**

Richmond, Va. (DATE TBD, 2026) – The [Virginia Council on Problem Gambling \(VCPG\)](#), in partnership with the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), recognizes March as **Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM)**. PGAM is designed to coincide each year with March Madness, when many Americans will take advantage of the expansion of legal online sports wagering.

This year's theme, **Caring Communities, Stronger Futures**, emphasizes the importance of a community-driven approach to problem gambling awareness and support. The annual campaign aims to increase public awareness of problem gambling and the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery services, as well as encourage healthcare providers to screen for problem gambling and connect individuals to appropriate support.

Problem gambling, defined as gambling behaviors that disrupt or damage personal, family or professional lives, affects millions of Americans. Nationally, approximately 2.5 million U.S. adults are estimated to meet the criteria for a severe gambling problem, and another 5-8 million individuals are considered to have mild to moderate gambling problems. Additionally, in the past year, approximately 20 million American adults reported experiencing at least one indicator of problematic gambling behavior.

"For the majority of adults, gambling can be a fun and entertaining experience, but there are risks involved," said Dr. Carolyn Hawley, President of the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling. "As gambling access continues to increase across the

Commonwealth, the Council's role as a trusted resource for education, prevention and recovery is more important than ever. When our communities come together with caring, understanding and proactive solutions, we can effectively address gambling-related harm and help shape stronger futures."

Dr. Hawley noted that calls to the Virginia Problem Gambling Helpline rose 39% in 2025, totaling 21,983 calls, while intakes – calls in which individuals directly requested help for problem gambling – increased 50% to 1,508. "These numbers reflect the rising need for accessible, compassionate support for individuals and families across Virginia," she added.

Some highlights from the VCPG's 2025 Annual Report [insert link] include:

- In 2025 alone, 21,983 calls were made to the VCPG's free 24-hour helpline, representing a 39% increase in call volume from 15,841 in 2024.
- VCPG connected 1,508 callers directly to a problem gambling treatment provider, representing a 50% increase from 1,002 callers connected in 2024.
- Callers to the problem gambling helpline in the 18-24 age bracket continue to rise. In 2025, 17.5% of the callers were in that age bracket, compared to 13% in 2024 and 9.1% in 2023.
- In 2025, gambling on online non-sports websites was cited as the #1 type of gambling activity that callers had engaged in – same as in 2024.
- However, sports gambling was the clear #2 type of gambling activity and slots at casinos was #3 in 2025. Last year, those two types were tied.
- Other types of gambling activities in 2025 included other casino games, table games, playing the lottery and skill games. Of particular note is that the percentage of table games gambling jumped up in 2025, compared to a much smaller percentage in 2024.
- Prominent financial ramifications from the callers' experiences with problem gambling included spending all their extra money, being late on bills, spending their savings, borrowing from friends/family and incurring additional credit card debt.

"As gambling options have become increasingly prevalent in Virginia, we at the Lottery are working hard to promote healthy and informed play for those who choose to play," said Virginia Lottery Executive Director [Khalid Jones](#). "It's very important that people take advantage of the resources available to Virginians who think they or a loved one may have a gambling problem."

"It's important for all individuals to be aware of the [signs of problem gambling](#), whether it's for themselves, a loved one or someone they know," Dr. Hawley concluded. "We want anyone who might be struggling with a gambling issue to know that help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

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 [vcpq.net](http://vcpq.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.

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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 [vcpq.net](http://vcpq.net) to chat online.**