

Mississippi Council on Problem and Compulsive Gambling

Accomplishments

- Operates a 24-hour toll-free help line that has received 145,746 calls and helped 17,662 gamblers, their families and friends since its inception.
- Conducted 19th Annual Workshop on Compulsive Gambling in 2015. Over 760 counselors have been trained in gambling addiction since our inception; less than 12 trained prior to MCPCG.
- Conducted 1st Southern Region Problem Gambling Conference in 2018.
- Conducted the first state prevalence study on problem and compulsive gambling in 1996.
- Developed and implemented counselor certification in gambling addiction.
- Developed youth brochure and booklet to help educate Mississippi's youth about addiction dangers.
- Conducted First Annual Youth Conference in 1999 on adolescent gambling issues.
- Provided senior citizens groups with information on gambling addiction.
- Created gambling addiction training manuals for both levels of our training.
- Supplied posters and brochures with our help line number to casinos, bingo halls, community service and treatment centers throughout Mississippi.
- Developed television and radio public service announcements and each aired in statewide markets.
- Donated books on problem gambling on an annual basis to almost 400 middle schools, high schools, junior colleges and universities.
- Provided speakers to civic organizations and other groups.
- Maintained and updated the MCPCG website which can be found at www.msgambler.org.
- Developed county referral resource directory for Mississippi.
- Developed Responsible Gaming Training Program for casino industry and provide training to casino employees on an annual basis.
- Helped gamblers in receiving treatment for gambling addiction at local residential gambling treatment center.

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TOLL-FREE 24-HOUR HELP LINE

The Mississippi Council operates a help line for problem and compulsive gamblers, which has received 145,746 calls and helped 17,662 gamblers, their families and friends since its inception. Over the past year we have noticed certain trends in the calls we have received for help. In an effort to learn more about compulsive gambling and those who suffer from this disorder, we have attempted to create a database of information from these calls. However, we recognize that some callers may be in such a state of crisis that the gathering of information is impossible.

In 2022 the help line received a total of 3071 calls, of which 312 were counseling calls. Eighty-six percent (86%) of our callers are seeking help for themselves, while others are calling about their spouses (2%), relatives (8%), and friends (2%). Thirty percent (30%) of our callers listed the internet as their referral source, while seventeen percent (17%) heard about our helpline number through the casinos.

MCPCG refers compulsive gamblers and their families to Gamblers Anonymous meetings, regional mental health centers, private treatment providers, and consumer credit counseling centers. MCPCG also offers text and chat in addition to our other help line services.

In 2008, the Council added a new component to our help line services. This component, Call to Change (C2C) Program, will provide additional support to our help line callers in taking the next step toward counseling and/or Gamblers Anonymous. The Call to Change (C2C) Program is a 6-week enhanced case management/relapse prevention program for problem gamblers consisting of phone sessions with a C2C counselor, weekly mailings and homework assignments. Unfortunately, this program was temporarily suspended in July 2021 due to loss of funding and budget cuts.

EDUCATION

- **Training Workshop for Counselors**

When the Mississippi Council (MCPCG) opened its offices in February 1996, there were less than one dozen counselors with any gambling addiction training in Mississippi. After only seven months, the Council held its first training in October 1996, during which 70 counselors received intensive training. In February 1997, the Council held its second two-day training course and this time an additional 100 counselors attended. At this workshop counselors can earn 30 hours of gambling specific training toward becoming a certified compulsive gambling counselor. Training is currently scheduled as needed based on the number of participants interested in certification.

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- **Training Manual**

The MCPCG has divided the information presented in the intensive training sessions into two 15-hour domains. In order to ensure adequate training MCPCG offers training manuals to each participant.

- **Certification**

MCPCG has established a Certification Board consisting of noted leaders in the healthcare industry. In its efforts to ensure the highest standards of treatment available, the Council has developed a stringent certification system. At this time, we have several clinicians in the process of becoming certified compulsive gambling counselors and twenty (20) who have received their certification.

- **Responsible Gaming Training**

The Council developed a Responsible Gaming Training Program designed to provide basic knowledge and increase awareness among casino employees about problem and compulsive gambling. The training includes facts about compulsive gamblers, profile of a compulsive gambler, signs of compulsive gambling in the workplace, types of gamblers and treatment options.

- **Youth Education & Awareness**

The Council published a booklet entitled “Mississippi’s Youth at Play” which is designed to educate Mississippi’s teens on the issues of problem gambling. With the current surge in today’s society, there is an elevated risk to our youth. This resource guide deals with the history of gambling, its effects on today’s youth and key issues regarding addiction and recovery. It was designed to be the groundwork for educating teens on the realities and consequences of gambling. The activities in this booklet are appropriate for upper elementary, middle school, junior high and high school students.

The Council also developed a youth brochure, “Too Young for a Gambling Problem? Don’t Bet on It”, which is targeted toward youth and is available upon request. The brochure includes the types of gambling activities, teen gambling warning signs and a list of questions to help determine if the teen may be having a problem.

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Over the past ten years, the Council has donated a book each year about problem and compulsive gambling, to almost 400 middle schools, high schools, junior colleges and universities. The books are placed in their libraries to be used by students for research.

- **Prevalence Study**

During the fall of 1996, MCPCG contracted with Mississippi State University and nationally renowned researcher, Dr. Rachel Volberg, to conduct the first prevalence study on problem and probable pathological gambling in Mississippi.

This research was significant in that it found that Mississippi had one of the highest rates of current problem and pathological gambling in the U.S. The study also found that Mississippians had the third highest lifetime problem gambling rate in the nation.

- **Help Line Database**

MCPCG developed a database for help line resources and a literature review on pathological gambling research and resources.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

- **Problem Gambling Awareness Video**

The Council produced a video titled "*All Bets Off*". The video features recovering gamblers and treatment professionals sharing their knowledge and experiences about problem and compulsive gambling. The video gives one a basic understanding about compulsive gambling from people who treat compulsive gamblers, as well as from people who have suffered from this addiction. This video also serves as an added component to our Responsible Gaming Training program for the casino industry.

- **Posters & Brochures**

Upon request the Council provides posters and brochures that display our toll-free help line number to any organization. Posters and brochures are placed in casinos, treatment facilities, bingo halls and community service centers.

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- **Public Service Announcements**

The Council produced four television public service announcements to educate families, youth, senior citizens, and the general public about gambling addiction. Grand Casinos, Inc. also donated a PSA targeting problem gamblers. All spots list our toll-free help line number. These spots have aired across the state in the local and cable markets.

A MCPCG radio public service announcement was also developed and sent to radio stations across the state.

- **Community Public Service Programs**

MCPCG board and staff have been guests on numerous radio and TV programs and contributors to numerous printed publications.

- **Exhibits**

MCPCG exhibits at health fairs and conferences throughout the year providing information about problem gambling.

- **Internet**

Our website is updated frequently and can be found at: www.msgambler.org. The Council's e-mail address is: mcpcg@netdoor.com.

Information on the website includes:

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| *Help line Statistics | *Related Links |
| *Upcoming Training Dates | *Prevalence Study |
| *Certification Criteria | *GA Meeting Schedule |
| *GA Twenty Questions | *List of Board of Directors |
| *List of Healthcare Providers | *List of Affiliate Councils |

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REFERRAL

A **referral resource book** was developed for our staff and counselors to refer people with gambling problems to the appropriate resources in their community. Resource information that MCPCG currently maintains in its book includes:

- *GA Meetings
- *Treatment Providers
- *Consumer Credit Centers
- *Suicide Help Centers
- *Mental Health Centers