

ALLEGANY COUNTY GOVERNMENT



PROCLAMATION

PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH HAVE THE CONVERSATION

WHEREAS, problem gambling is a public health issue affecting millions of Americans of all ages, races, ethnic, and economic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, problem gambling has a significant societal and economic cost for individuals, families, businesses, and communities; and

WHEREAS, problem gambling is treatable and treatment is effective in minimizing this harm to both individuals and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, in Allegany County, the Allegany County Health Department (Behavioral Health) and the Western Maryland Health System (Behavioral Health Services) are local resources for problem gamblers.

NOW, THEREFORE, we, The Board of County Commissioners of Allegany County, do hereby proclaim the month of March, 2018, as Problem Gambling Awareness Month in Allegany County. We strongly encourage all citizens to **HAVE THE CONVERSATION** with family members and friends about gambling addiction and encourage affected individuals to seek help now.

1-800-GAMBLER
WWW.HELPMYGAMBLING.ORG

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ALLEGANY COUNTY

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Social Issue: Problem Gambling**National Problem Gambling Awareness Month Proclamation Presentation****Overview**

Problem gambling defined: is an urge to gamble continuously despite harmful negative consequences or a desire to stop. Problem gambling is a public health issue affecting all aspects of physical, social, & mental health. It can affect families, work performance, and general well-being. Tonight, I will discuss some facts & statistics about Problem Gambling, signs of Problem Gambling, what is currently being done, and what recommendations we could make going forward.

Personal Issue Reference:

- Anecdotal evidence recap: As a bank representative I have seen a rise in the incidents of Problem Gambling in the past five years. I work in the retail banking industry which means I work one on one with people for their banking needs. I have seen the affect Problem Gambling has on the individuals, their families, their workplaces, and society. That is how I fit into this picture and were my concerns originate from.

Problem Gambling Statistics

What is gambling? Gambling is any activity that involves risking something of value, including but not limited to money or property, on an event whose outcome is uncertain i.e. slots, bingo, tips, paper gaming etc.

According to the Maryland Center of Problem Gambling:

<http://www.mdproblemgambling.com/facts/>

- Gambling generates more revenue than movies, spectator sports, theme parks, cruise ships, and recorded music industries combined.
- People who live within ten miles of a casino are **twice** as likely to be a problem gambler or pathological gambler or pathological gambler as those who do not.
- Gambling problems were initially recognized as an impulse control disorder but have recently been reclassified by the American Psychiatric Association as an addiction.
- The Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene conducted a study before the first Maryland Casino opened in 2010, and published it in 2011. They found that nearly 90% of Marylanders had gambled, and that 3.4% were either pathological gamblers or Problem Gamblers. (<https://www.wcbradio.com/?archiv=more-in-maryland-see-help-for-gambling-problems>)

- According to the US Census department as of 2017 Allegany County had a adult population (18 & over) of 59,436 so that would mean potentially 2021 residents are affected. Since the opening of the new Rocky Gap Casino (05/22/2013) it would be fair to say that number may have increased. (<https://www.rockygapcasino.com/fact-sheet/>)

General Statistics & Facts about Problem Gambling:

- Gamblers don't feel "addicted". They may not realize they have a problem
- Anyone who gambles can develop a gambling problem if they are not aware of the risks.
- Gambling has the same effect on a problem gambler that alcohol has on an alcoholic.
- Problem Gamblers are more at risk for developing other addictions, such as drugs or alcohol.
- About 2 million (1%) of American adults meet the criteria for "pathological" gambling.
- Another 4-6 million (2%) are considered "problem gamblers" or gamblers that are at risk of developing a severe gambling problem.
- Children can be problem gamblers; participating in on-line and sports gambling. Children who are involved in gambling are more likely to develop gambling related problems as adults.
- The social cost of problem gambling is at \$6 billion per year.
- Problem gambling often leads to financial devastation, poor health, substance abuse, depression, and suicidal behavior.

Some demographic groups are disproportionately affected by Problem Gambling according to the National Statistics:

Veterans:

- 1% of military personnel experience one serious gambling related problem in their life.
- It is estimated that at least 36,000-48,000 active duty US service members may have a gambling problem.
- 40% of veterans seeking treatment for gambling problems have reported suicide attempts.
- 64% of those who attempted suicide reported their attempt was related to gambling.
- Veterans in treatment for PTSD are up to 60 times more likely to develop a gambling problem.

Seniors:

- Over half of all adults who visit casinos are age 50 or older.
- 70% of seniors gamble each year.
- More than 1 out of 10 people over the age of 65 are considered at risk of financial problems because of gambling.

College Students:

- Researchers estimate that 75% of college students gambled during the past year, whether legally or illegally.
- Approximately 6% of college students in the U.S. have a serious gambling problem
- The most frequently chosen gambling activity for college students is the lottery at 41% followed by card games at 38% and sports betting at 23%

Signs of Problem Gambling:

- Spending increasing periods of time gambling
- Being preoccupied with gambling

- Spending increasing amounts of money
- “Chasing losses”
- Borrowing money to gamble
- Increasing debt because of gambling
- Engaging in fraud or theft to finance gambling
- Lying to cover up gambling
- Neglecting work, family, or friends
- Gambling to escape from obligations or life’s daily pressures.

If you can answer yes to ONE of these statements, you may have a gambling problem:

- I have lost control over gambling
- I am playing for longer periods than I had planned on.
- I am often gambling when I should be doing other things
- I am not able to stop thinking about gambling
- I am lying about my gambling to my family and friends.
- I am having problems with my friends and family because of gambling.
- I am borrowing and stealing money from family and friends to keep gambling.
- I am spending more money than I wanted to spend on gambling
- Gambling helps me escape from my personal problems.
- I feel better when I am gambling and anxious when I’m not.

What’s being done

- 24/7 Hotline Nationwide: 1-800-Gambler
- Online resource provided by the State of Maryland: <http://www.helpmygamblingproblem.org>
- Maryland Voluntary Exclusion program
- According the National Council on Problem no federal money is spent on the issue.

Local Resources

- Western Maryland Health System (WMHS) – Behavioral Health Services – Gambling Counselor
Kathryn Whitacre
240-964-8585
12502 Willowbrook Rd
Cumberland, MD 21502
- Allegany County Health Department – Behavioral Health
Lue Lease
301-759-5050
12503 Willowbrook Rd
Cumberland, MD 21502
- Garrett county has not counselors listed in the public domain.

Recommendations moving forward

- County-wide proclamation that March is National Problem Gambling Awareness Month
- Find ways to utilize existing resources around the issue more efficiently and effectively.
- Ethics & gaming commission create a sub-committee to make recommendations to the County Commissioners to look at ways raise to make county gaming more socially responsible i.e. hotline number posted on the machines, brochures made available, simple signs “play

responsibly” etc. As one of only two counties that administers paper gaming, social responsibility should be a paramount force driving county gaming operations.

- Have local libraries “get the word out” by marketing the Hotline and provide educational brochures to spread public awareness.
- Find ways to make the counselors at the Health Department and the WMHS more visible & accessible.
- Host a lunch & learn event with area health practitioners, lawyers, and financial providers as well as vested area resources.