

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL AUGUST 2009

August is usually a quiet month at the Council; the focus is on the upcoming conference, a highlight of the year. Speakers were finalized, materials were chosen for distribution to attendees and all Council staff reached out to prospective attendees to try to increase attendance. Decisions were made on literature and promotional items to distribute.

The Council also joined with the New Jersey Lottery for the kickoff of the 2009 "Not 18 Yet? No Bet" public awareness campaign. The campaign resulted in several radio and television segments on the subject of youth underage gambling. The rollout coincided with the imposition of a major fine against a casino for underage gambling, creating a window of opportunity for us to emphasize the need for enforcement of age gambling restrictions. Studies have revealed that most pathological gamblers begin gambling around age 10; consequently, prevention and messages about the consequences of gambling need to begin at a young age.

There was one lecture to at-risk population in August and several health fairs attended. Terry Elman, the Council Education Coordinator did a lot of work with the military, specifically the National Guard. A great deal of gambling takes place in the military, and it is important to discuss the dangers of gambling with that population.

The Council initiated planning for additional training programs for treatment and criminal justice professionals, which we hope will take place later in the year. At present, there are few opportunities for counselors to obtain basic or continuing education on compulsive gambling.

Interesting Research of the Month: A substance abuse study out of Chicago indicated the presence of a particular gene, the D-2 receptor, which may be the cause of substance abuse and compulsive behaviors like problem gambling. This supports the theory that certain people's brains may be predisposed towards problem gambling through genetic makeup. This breakthrough helps to demonstrate that problem gambling is treatable and explains why the percent of the population with gambling problems remains fairly constant, independent of the strictness of gambling laws.

The Council received 2,068 calls on the 1-800-GAMBLER® helpline in August, which reflected 200 calls more than any other month this year. This may mean that the efforts to publicize the number have been successful; it may reflect the Pennsylvania promos, which can induce New Jersey residents to call the helpline number. A great majority of these calls were inappropriate, seeking room reservations for hotels or lottery winning information. In August there were 136 intakes, so 6.5% of our total calls were actual intakes.

The trend this month seemed to be calls from family members seeking help for themselves, as opposed to the gambler. One woman called about getting help for her husband and her son and was referred to Gam-Anon to get help for herself. Another woman called knowing that her husband would not stop gambling, and stated that he had told her to leave if he she did not like it. She indicated she

loved him and wanted to stay and was thus seeking help for herself. She was directed to both therapy and a Gam-Anon room. The treatment program administered by the Council provides for treatment of compulsive gamblers and/or their significant others. We are constantly reminded that compulsive gambling is a family illness; one study shows that a compulsive gambler affects 10-15 other people including family, friends, co-workers, bosses and even strangers.