

## DECEMBER 2009 COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

December saw the conclusion of the first free 30 hour gambling training offered by the Council to licensed and certified mental health and addiction professionals. The evaluations by participants showed this was a highly valued program. The Council will soon be offering its second 30 hour training, which will begin on April 16, 2010 and proceed over five sessions until June 4, 2010. The training will be held at 27 Warren Street, Somerset, New Jersey (at the Somerset County Human Services Department, which can hold up to 80 students). As of this writing, 49 people have expressed interest in attending.

Council members gave presentations to The Association of Professionals Treating Problem Gambling (APTPG), Catholic Charities/Edison and New Hope Foundation in December. There were seven (7) presentations to high schools and three (3) senior citizen presentations. As well, there were three (3) presentations to IDRC (Intoxicated Drivers Resource Center) clients. This reflects that individuals with alcohol problems have a higher rate of gambling problems than the general population.

Another area of focus for the Council is increasing awareness of the impact of compulsive and problem gambling and steps that can be taken to help or intervene. In December, we issued a news release about Holiday Gifting of Lottery Tickets to Children, in collaboration with the New Jersey Lottery. We also continued to provide planning, consultation and technical assistance to State, local and community programs on development of services for compulsive gamblers. The Council submitted comments on two (2) proposed State regulations, recommended ways to improve statewide screening activities, and advised on development of a proposal for a new prevention program.

There were 146 helpline intakes in December, 2009. For the year 2009 there were 19,976 calls made to the 1-800GAMBLER helpline, resulting in 1,719 intakes with referrals made to Gamblers Anonymous or treatment. Elaine Haines of the Council handled 511 intakes for the year and Alice Ostapiuk handled 196 intakes. There were 63,237 hits in December to the Council website, [www.800GAMBLER.org](http://www.800GAMBLER.org). A total of 856,469 hits occurred in 2009.

There were some interesting helpline calls, demonstrating the scope of gambling problems. A woman called to advise that her mother was a gambler and had used a disabled daughter's social security and disability payments for gambling. She was informed about Gam-Anon, a way to help family members who have been affected by gambling. Another caller asked how to get released from a five year self exclusion filing. In New Jersey it has been held by the courts that an individual is bound by a self exclusion decision, whether it is for one year, five years or lifetime. Another caller from out of state expressed suicidal ideation. That is not unusual, as studies have shown that 20% of compulsive gamblers have attempted suicide, higher than for any other addiction. The helpline representative gave the caller hope, and the caller agreed to attend Gambler's Anonymous and contact his minister to discuss his problems.