

What's Happening at the Council

The Council maintained a booth at two conferences in November: The New Jersey Education Association and the Pennsylvania Council on Compulsive Gambling. We met with the American Corrections Association and Harrah's Casino. Lectures were given at New Jersey City University, several IDRC group meetings, the Recovery Center in Paterson and New Hope Foundation. Five high school presentations and four presentations to senior citizens were also completed in November.

The Council conducted a free, 30 hour training on compulsive gambling for certified and licensed mental health and addiction counselors. This training began in November and continued through December. There is a great need for additional Certified Compulsive Gambling Counselors and the Council provided the educational training requirements over five 6-hour sessions. The presenters were Jeff Beck and Terry Elman of the Council and Madolyn Smith, a Council consultant. This training addressed gambling basics, treatment planning, gambling and the law, Individual counseling, group counseling and family counseling. 27 individuals attended the training that was provided at the council, because of space limitations we had to turn people away. An additional 30 hour free training will be provided in April/May 2010, 40 individuals to date have signed up. We have found a larger space to conduct this training.

Interesting research of the month: A presentation at the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology spoke of advances in medications to address problem gambling. Dr Jon Grant sub-typed gamblers into two groups: those driven by urges and those who have difficulty inhibiting behaviors. The former group has responded well to medications that block the opioid system, like naltrexone, and the second group has responded well to medications that act on a specific enzyme, catechol-O-methyl-transferase (COMT). While these results are promising there is still a lot of work to be done. Sub-typing gamblers in this way helps target the core biology of the illness with individualized treatment.

The Council referred 130 helpline callers to Gamblers Anonymous and/or Certified Gambling Counselors in November 2009 through the 1-800-GAMBLER® Helpline. There were 290 treatment sessions provided by authorized counselors or agencies in November. These are truly two of our core functions, to refer people for help and coordinate the treatment program. This is the day to day operation of the Council, and allows us to fulfill our major obligations of disseminating information and assuring that treatment is available for compulsive gamblers and their families.