

Governor Charlie Crist proclaimed the week of March 1-7, 2009, Problem Gambling Awareness Week (PGAW) in the State of Florida. The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) joined forces with the Governor and organizations across the state to raise public awareness about the effects of pathological (commonly referred to as compulsive) gambling, and spreading the message of hope that gambling addiction is treatable for those who seek help. The FCCG's theme for this year's PGAW was *Shining the Light on Problem Gambling* with a focus on the impact compulsive gambling has on crime. The primary objective was to shine the light on what is often referred to as the "hidden addiction", thus revealing the signs and underlying issues stemming from problem gambling. The Governor, Mayors, the gaming industry, businesses, state and local agencies, and media partners throughout the state were among those standing with the FCCG in this effort to inform the public and assist people who have difficulty with gambling. In addition to the Governor's Proclamation, nine Mayors in the state proclaimed the week for their city and agencies throughout the state participated by putting the PGAW Web banner on their website with a link to the FCCG/ PGAW website. Letters and Point Sheets highlighting HelpLine statistics for the year were provided to agencies via email and/or mailouts to promote the FCCG's HelpLine service.

Using Partners and Community Educators, the FCCG dispersed over 33,000 PGAW Signature Items (Flashlights, Buttons, Crime placards, HR Placards) and over 100,000 promotional items (brochures, collateral materials) throughout the state. All Signature and Promotional materials provided the HelpLine, 888-ADMIT-IT number. Throughout the week, the FCCG urged treatment and other health care providers to screen patients for a gambling problem, providing the screening tools on the PGAW website. One mental health facility participated in a "Screening Clinic" to highlight the week. Exhibits at libraries and community events organized by FCCG Partners were held throughout the week to raise awareness.

In addition to public service announcements, a dedicated web site, and statewide distribution of collateral materials, the FCCG had a mobile billboard display in front of the Historic Capitol in Tallahassee on Monday, March 2nd and Friday, March 6th. The public was invited to participate in the movement by visiting [www.lightsonproblemgambling.com](http://www.lightsonproblemgambling.com) to educate themselves on the issue, calling the 24-hour (Helpline 888-ADMIT-IT) on behalf of a friend or family member with a possible gambling problem, and passing along messages to others via email or other social marketing tools such as Facebook and Myspace. The FCCG is in the process of determining exposures in each of these venues for future NPGAW planning.