

For Immediate Release

Contact: The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc. 609-588-5515
Donald F. Weinbaum, Executive Director don@800gambler.org
Jeffrey Beck, Clinical Coordinator ccgnieff@aol.com

Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey Recognizes World Suicide Prevention Day

September 10, 2011 is World Suicide Prevention Day. According to the World Health Organization, 1 million people around the world die by suicide every year. Studies have shown compulsive gamblers are at greater risk for suicide than any other addiction.

The National Council on Problem Gambling states that 20% of compulsive gamblers attempt suicide. Other research shows that compulsive gamblers have rates of suicidal thoughts as high as 70% and that gambling increases the likelihood of a suicide attempt. This may help to explain why a 1997 study found that Atlantic City, Reno and Las Vegas had substantially more suicides than comparatively sized cities and why Las Vegas currently ranks #1 for suicides among all US cities.

According to Donald Weinbaum, Executive Director of The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc. (CCGNJ), some of these deaths might be prevented with increased awareness and intervention for gambling addiction. He urges professionals and community members alike to be aware of the signs of a serious gambling problem. Since compulsive gambling is a risk factor for suicide, treatment providers should always carefully screen for suicidal ideation.

Here is some important information on the connections between gambling and suicide:

- Know the triggers: Problem gambling can lead to family and financial stress, alcoholism or drug abuse, anger and hostility, relationship breakup, sleep pattern changes, emotional difficulties and social isolation. Each of these is also a risk factor for suicide.
- There is high correlation between problem gambling and depression, one may lead to the other or there may be underlying common factors.
- Individual factors associated with suicide among gamblers include physical illness, substance abuse, poor coping skills, criminal record, academic or vocational failure, and social isolation.
- Suicide is often considered out of desperation. Thoughts of suicide may be associated with greater gambling severity, gambling to escape, attention seeking or impulsivity.

But there are other options: A Certified Compulsive Gambling Counselor can restore hope by providing alternative solutions. The therapist, or a Gamblers Anonymous group, can help reduce the pain, fill the frustrated need, and provide alternatives to the desired goal of cessation of consciousness.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, you can call the Council's free confidential helpline, 1-800-GAMBLER®. The price of not seeking help can be deadly. CCGNJ hopes that World Suicide Prevention Day may be an opportunity to seek help for a gambling problem, before it gets too late. We care and can help.

About The Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc.:

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, Inc. is a private non-profit organization that provides information, education and referral services for people affected by a gambling problem. The Council's mission is to educate the public to the fact that compulsive gambling is a treatable illness.

The Council's 1-800-GAMBLER® Helpline and website www.800gambler.org have been resources for thousands of people who are compulsive gamblers and recovering from compulsive gambling, as well as their friends and families.