



NPGA LAUNCHES INAUGURAL CLERGY-SPIRITUAL LEADER TRAINING

This spring NPGA is offering its inaugural International Gambling Counselor Certification Board (IGCCB) clergy/spiritual leader training. We seek to expand outreach throughout Minnesota and among community groups that don't necessarily see counseling/treatment as their first step towards help. The goal of the program is to increase the knowledge and equip influential community leaders with some basic understanding of problem gambling. The program provides spiritual leaders an opportunity to interact with each other as they seek to increase their community's awareness of the issue of problem gambling, reduce any stigma related to problem gambling and facilitate discussions about ways in which harm can be minimized.

As part of this initial training, eight leaders from the Twin Cities Nigerian community will learn about gambling disorder, who it impacts, available resources, and how

to engage in conversations that help those impacted as well as educating their congregations and community groups.

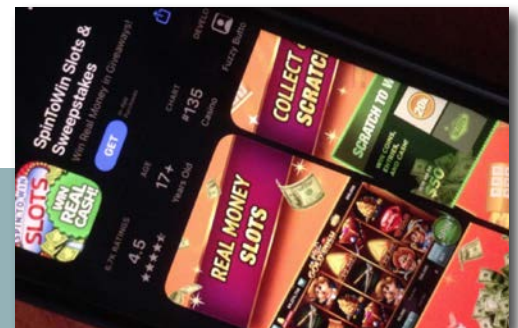
Each of the eight individuals will take 16 hours of online course work in the following eleven modules:

1. Definitions and Diagnostic Criteria
2. Special Populations and Gambling Disorders: Women and Multicultural
3. Scope and Prevalence of Disordered Gambling
4. Assessing Gambling Disorder
5. Co-Occurring Disorders and Gambling Disorders
6. Screening for Gambling Disorder and Impacts of Gambling
7. Best Practices and Evidence-Based Strategies for Treatment of Gambling Disorder: Motivational Interviewing
8. Family Intervention
9. Financial Issues and the Meaning of Money
10. Neurobiology and Psychopharmacology
11. Special Populations and Gambling Disorders: Youth and Older Adults

In early May, the group convened on Zoom with a trained spiritual facilitator to discuss possible scenarios and ways they can engage their community member in a meaningful and resourceful way. Those who completed the full 24 hours will receive a certificate of completion. The IGCCB offers an actual certification that can be obtained by doing additional community project work, but for this inaugural program NPGA opted for the certificate. We will revisit this once we're well past the restrictions of COVID.

PROBLEM GAMBLING FEATURED ON MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO

NPGA was part of a discussion about the lure of gambling during a pandemic that aired on MPR News with Angela Davis on April 12. NPGA Executive Director Susan Sheridan Tucker and Lisa Vig-Johnson, problem gambling treatment provider, discussed the impact of the pandemic on those who experience issues with gambling and gambling disorder. The conversation highlighted the signs of problem gambling and concerns about the expansion of sports betting and online gambling. You can listen to the show by visiting www.NorthstarPG.org/resources. This was a much-appreciated opportunity to broaden awareness of problem gambling, particularly in light of the rapid pace in which changes are occurring in the industry.





Susan Sheridan Tucker
Executive Director
NPGA

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Problem Gambling in Minnesota: A Funding Cut Averted – We think

As mercurial spring turns into mellow summer, I'm reflecting on the activities of the new year. On the positive side, we had a successful Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM). NPGA increased its public awareness campaign this year with a more comprehensive approach that included radio, digital, newspapers, billboards and social media. As part of PGAM, we launched a revamped website, funded training for treatment providers to increase their competency in problem gambling treatment and inaugurated a clergy/spiritual leader training.

The more challenging side was the biannual budget process with the Minnesota Department of Human Resources (DHS). The state gambling fund is the only source for problem gambling programs. There are no federal funds available. It was quite disheartening to learn that DHS initially planned to cut \$1 million from the program, of which half is earmarked to NPGA. However, through support of several legislators, the funding was put back, but we won't know for certain until the state budget is approved in mid-June's special session, or later, whether the latest budget agreements remain.

NPGA is fully committed to its mission and there is still much work to do. Minnesota needs to be training and raising its reimbursement rate so that more LADCs, social workers, LMFTs, LLPCs and psychologists who see clients with gambling issues are well versed to address the addiction and are encouraged to become state-certified providers. We need curriculum and access at the middle school and high school levels to educate teens about the risks of video game play and how gambling is often embedded in their functions. We need more Minnesotans to understand the complexities of this addiction and increase empathy toward individuals and their families ensnared in issues associated with problem gambling.

Gambling addiction continues to be a stepchild in the world of addiction. While tens of millions are spent on other addictions, NPGA works with less than \$600,000 a year to address this significant issue. There's nothing worse than having to compete with other addictions for acceptance and funding. NPGA will continue working with lawmakers to introduce a reform bill regarding the delivery of problem gambling services. As we move forward in this effort, please consider making your voice heard in St. Paul so that legislators can better grasp the magnitude of this issue and provide funding commensurate with the task at hand.

We can and must do better Minnesota!

Susan Sheridan Tucker

Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to help those affected by problem gambling in Minnesota. We do this by promoting awareness and understanding of the issue via our website, newsletter, community education programs, sponsorship of the Minnesota State Conference of Problem Gambling, and training of professionals in preventing and treating problem gambling.

Northern Light is funded by a grant from the state of Minnesota. Designer: ESD Graphics. Writer: Bill Stein



IN THEIR OWN *Words* Margaret's Story

I never gambled – or really knew much about it – until a friend suggested we go out and gamble for fun. We were both looking for a way to escape our hurts. I had just gotten divorced from an alcoholic husband and my friend had recently become a widower. I also suffered depression associated with MS, and a gambling outing helped me escape that.

Gambling allowed us to forget about everything. I didn't have to talk to anyone. I started with maybe \$60 per outing but it escalated. Eventually, I couldn't stop. I would always need another \$100 bill. My friend (who later became my second husband) could sometimes go home making a few hundred dollars, but I never could.

I am doing well in my recovery. I lost my second husband to cancer but have not gone back to gambling. I have worked too hard to throw away my freedom from gambling.

I would gamble for any reason — to celebrate a good day or to help raise my spirits from a bad day. Eventually, after 11 years of gambling, I started thinking I had a gambling problem. I told my husband that I thought I had a problem, but he didn't believe me. Neither did my in-laws, whose vacations frequently included considerable amounts of gambling.

Once I determined I needed help to keep me from gambling, I explored options. I was hesitant to join a group because I had a poor experience with Al-Anon back when I sought ways to cope with my then-husband's alcoholism.

I ultimately found a program online that I ordered for \$99. I figured I could do the program in the privacy of my own home and figured it had to have value given its cost.

Unfortunately, not being particularly savvy with computers, I needed help setting up the program. I didn't expect that the person I would call for computer help would be a therapist, but that's what happened. The person I ended up talking to, Dawn, would become the therapist who would lead me out of the darkness of gambling addiction.

After helping get the program set up, Dawn gently asked some additional questions. Why did I want the program? How serious was I? Had I looked into alternatives? Dawn then said she would check on me in a few weeks to see how I was doing. That started us down the path of telephone counseling, something she was able to get covered by insurance.

I really connected with Dawn, and found myself wanting to follow the program because I didn't want to disappoint her. She was also the first therapist I had who knew anything about gambling and could explore the connection between gambling and depression.

One thing that I've learned about gambling addiction that's different from other

addictions is the randomness of the reward. Someone who drinks or uses drugs knows the impact it will have on them — they will get drunk or high. But gambling is so unpredictable. You could do five spins and win hundreds or lose hundreds. That unpredictability is something gambling addicts love.

I am doing well in my recovery. I lost my second husband to cancer but have not gone back to gambling. I have worked too hard to throw away my freedom from gambling.

COVID, and the related restrictions, has also actually helped me. Even when things reopened, my husband and I were too afraid to go back to the casinos.

As part of my recovery, I told my adult children about my gambling problem. That was a big deal to me.

It feels so good to spend the money that I previously spent on gambling on my children and grandchildren instead. I take them out for dinner, get them birthday gifts and spend more time with them. That, not gambling, now means the world to me.

Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

Visit www.minnesotaga.com to find open meetings for compulsive gamblers as well as family and friends, or closed meetings for compulsive gamblers and those who think they may have a gambling problem.

NPGA Participates in Problem Gambling Awareness Month Activities

March 2021 marked the 19th year of Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM), a time when the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), state affiliates and other NCPG members increase their efforts on awareness, prevention and training.

Look Beyond the Obvious

After I was referred to a gambling treatment counselor, my life changed. I am so glad my healthcare provider knew that gambling could be an addiction.

Gambling addiction may not be top-of-mind when you meet with your client, but it's far more common than you think. Learn the signs of "the hidden addiction."

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Here are some important things for health providers to know.

The Screen's the Thing Assessment and Diagnostic Tools

The Two Yes Answers That Should Raise Concern

Help is Available at

Betting the house

Keeping my house

The choice is yours. Gambling addiction can be treated.

Northstar Alliance

"He'll stop after this game (or when the sun comes up)."

Gambling (addiction can be treated).

Find help now

Funding by MNDS grant

Emails and Digital Ads

NPGA participates in this effort each year, creating its own campaign as well as tapping into the messaging that NCPG offers. Daily postings were made to NPGA social media pages throughout the month.

This year's NPGA's efforts were its most comprehensive awareness campaign to date. With the creative assistance of Preston Kelly, a Minneapolis advertising agency, several different campaign messages were created and distributed to radio, billboards, and digital and social media. Preston Kelly helped us develop three distinct personas that formed the focus of our campaign: the problem gambler, the concerned other and the influencer. While these were not "new" personas to us, the manner in which specific demographic and other marketing data was utilized enabled us to pinpoint our target audiences with tailored messaging.

We also paired up with KEAN radio's Dan the Common Man. As a person in recovery, he understood the importance of our messaging. Dan's on-air conversation typically includes discussion about game odds and brackets, particularly during March Madness when so many wager on the college basketball tournament. This allowed us to communicate a timely reminder to people about how to approach their gambling responsibly and how to

recognize when it might be becoming an addiction.

We also created a special URL so that we could track visitors to our website. We are in the process of reviewing that data so we can assess and fine-tune future efforts.

During March, we also made a **special effort to reach out to mental health and addiction treatment providers to remind them to screen for problem gambling.** We reminded them to talk to their clients about all the activities they are engaged in. Gambling addiction often occurs when there's a history of addiction to drugs and alcohol, or when there is depression and anxiety.

NPGA offered scholarships to 14 providers for training through NCPG's Washington state affiliate, The Evergreen Council. This training informed counselors about fast-changing sports betting, the increase in online gambling and the convergence of gambling disorder and gaming disorder.

NPGA's executive director, **Susan Sheridan Tucker, participated in two podcasts during PGAM.** Susan appeared on Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, an Oregon-based podcast, along with Krystal Smith to detail NCPG's effort for PGAM. She also was invited to chat with Brian Hatch of All In. These podcasts can be found on the Resources page of our website.

NPGA launched its new website (NorthstarPG.org) just in time for PGAM. Many thanks to Evans-Stark Design, Bill Stein, Tiffany Roufs and Linda Bisdorf (who we temporarily brought out of retirement for some extraordinary proofreading) for bringing everything together. It was truly a team effort and we're quite pleased with the results. We hope you take the time to explore the site, and we would love to hear your feedback. Our goal is to enable the visitor to easily access the information they need from a vast knowledge base.

"I'm headed to the casino (by myself again)."

Gambling (addiction can be treated).

MinnesotaProblemGambling.org

Funding by MNDS grant

Billboards

Bettor Safe – A New Educational Campaign About Online Gambling



As more and more states expand access to sports and online gambling – amid ever-advancing technology – the need for comprehensive compliance and consumer protection will be critical to minimizing the harm to gamblers.

Advanced technology is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides easier access to gambling options, as one can place their bets on the bus, on a lunch break or from their home, playing with little to no disruption. For those with a gambling problem, this could exacerbate the harms. However, on the flip side, with so much data being collected on the player (and information used by the operator for marketing purposes and to keep players engaged), there are opportunities to do more advanced player interventions if they appear to be exhibiting problem behavior. This means that as more gambling migrates to online platforms, regulators and operators can no longer turn a blind eye to customers who are not playing responsibly.

Gambler education is one key to reducing harm for those who gamble online. Bettor Safe (www.bettorsafe.org) is a

new consumer education campaign designed to highlight the risks of illegal betting sites and provide consumers with resources to improve their understanding of online betting. Currently, online gambling and sports betting is not legal in Minnesota. This means that those engaging in these activities are being directed to offshore, unregulated sites. Bettor Safe points out the differences between regulated sites and unregulated sites. It is currently running campaigns in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, two early adopters of sports and online gambling.

Bettor Safe was developed by the founders of GEOComply, the iGaming industry's go-to for reliable, accurate and precise geolocation services. GEOComply has been expanding its offering beyond its primary focus of geolocation into areas such as multi-state KYC (Know Your Customer) and digital ID verification, payment and fraud analytics, and responsible gaming. Bettor Safe is the first initiative of GEOComply's Conscious Gaming, a separate nonprofit that is developing responsible gambling tools as a way of giving back to the industry.



PODCASTS ADDRESSING PROBLEM GAMBLING

More and more podcasts are popping up in the field of problem gambling, each with its own particular focus. NPGA provides links to these podcasts on the **RESOURCES** page of NorthstarPG.org.

Here's a couple of featured podcasts:



All In: The Addicted Gambler's Podcast.

Chris Pruitt co-created this podcast with Brian Hatch in January 2015. It's the first podcast that addresses the issues of

problem gambling and gambling disorder. Hosts Chris, Brian and Jeff Wasserman (director of the Delaware Council) are people in recovery. They have recorded over 200 episodes of heartbreaking first-hand problem gambling stories, recovery meetings, interviews with problem gambling advocates, judges, clinicians, sportswriters, and those who study the addiction. The purpose is to shine a light on this large problem that gets little attention. Since this first podcast, several podcasts relating to gambling addiction have come online.



In a recent episode of the podcast ***The Best Minds Podcast***, Mike Schiks, recently retired CEO of Project Turnabout and member of the

NPGA board, discussed his 40-year career in addiction and recovery services with host Jeff Jay.

UPDATE ON SPORTS BETTING LEGISLATION

This year, three sports betting bills were introduced at the Minnesota legislature. None of the bills contained satisfactory consumer protection language and NPGA supplemented each bill with extensive language to insert in the bills.

Due to COVID and disinterest from the tribal nations to move forward with sports betting, the bills have not progressed. Many of the tribal nations are taking their time to understand the full impact of legalizing sports betting and the potential benefit and ramifications to their communities.

Given the rapid pace at which so many states and sports leagues are moving to align with sport betting licenses and cultivate new revenue streams, it appears that it's only a matter of time before Minnesota passes some sports betting legislation. Sports betting has now been legalized in over 20 states plus the District of Columbia with many permitting online betting.

As this type of gambling continues to grow, we need to ensure that players minimize their risks and have the resources they need should their gambling become a problem.

BCLC NEW HORIZONS CONFERENCE IN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING 2021

The annual New Horizons Conference in Responsible Gambling, hosted by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC), attracts critical and forward thinkers that consider how the gambling industry can improve its role in developing meaningful responsible gambling tools.

Last year, BCLC committed itself to a long-term aspirational goal of future proofing the industry — a point where no gambling revenue would be generated by those exhibiting problem gambling or gambling disorder. This year's theme was *Player Health Reboot: Resetting the Future*.

Futurist Sanjay Khanna detailed the large-scale environmental and societal changes the globe is grappling with and how this era will impact the future of the gambling industry. Khanna explained how influences like climate change and the proliferation of smart phones and social media will affect player health, social resilience and the future concept of play. He offered suggestions on how operators, product designers and policy makers can use technology, innovation and diversity to 'reset' and prepare for a future that is positive, resilient and sustainable. He emphasized that player health needs to be considered by design and incorporated into the early inception of new products and services.

Another thought-provoking session was presented by Dr. Brett Abarbanel, director of research at the International Gaming Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She examined the definition of gambling and how elements of gambling and chance appear in unexpected ways in video games, Esports, virtual reality and other applications.

Dr. Abarbanel explained how the word gambling can mean different things to different people. She noted that it can mean a casino game, a slot machine, a poker game, the flipping of a coin at the start of a sports contest, or when rolling the dice in a board game. Regulators in jurisdictions worldwide are challenged by these questions in determining the legality of emerging video-gaming elements such as loot boxes.

"Game developers, toy designers and spectator-engagement tool creators who are putting these things together may not even realize the potentially legal and certainly social ramifications of even just adding a simple random number generator to their games or other gambling-like elements," says Dr. Abarbanel. "How we define gambling really starts to come into play."

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Why belong to the Alliance?

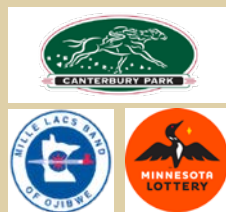
You can make NPGA's voice stronger and affirm the value of our work. Gambling disorder is a real and destructive addiction. Our work is not about prohibition, but to ensure those negatively impacted have available resources for recovery and to minimize the risks for all. Better informed consumers make better choices. More members equal greater credibility with decision makers. Visit our membership page at www.Northstarp.org membership.

PLATINUM



Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
Minnesota Indian Gaming Association

GOLD



Canterbury Park
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Minnesota State Lottery

SILVER



Project Turnabout

BRONZE



Crossroads Residential Aftercare
Lester Prairie Lions



Cultural Competency In Treating Problem Gambling

As most people know, the American healthcare system has not treated people of color (POC) equitably. The pandemic has focused attention on the disparities between Whites and People of Color, as COVID fatalities are much higher for POC than Whites. Add in the racial unrest occurring in our own backyard — and around the country — and you get a sense of the stresses faced by POC. As a result, traditional counseling that White people might access is not the first choice for POC seeking help.

A virtual webinar conducted by Dr. Deborah Haskins, Ph.D., LCPC, ACS, MAC, ICGC-II, BACC, CEO, Mosaic Consulting and Counseling Services and President of the Maryland Council of Problem Gambling, highlighted some of the cultural interpretations among POC, examined some of the cultural considerations influencing gambling disorder, and introduced the cultural attunement model in her program *Cultural Competency, Equity and Inclusion and Disordered Gambling Treatment and Prevention*.

Dr. Haskins stressed the need to understand cultural context when considering clients of color. Problem gambling is perceived as a “White man’s problem” because the approach to prevention seems only geared to Whites and POC do not see themselves represented.

Dr. Haskins provided overviews of various communities, including African American, Native American, Southeast Asians and Latinx. Each have very different views of gambling and how, when and where to seek help. Talk therapy is not the best fit for many communities and Dr. Haskins suggested we need to do more to shift the way in which we design and support problem gambling programs. She also described the cultural attunement model whereby counselors incorporate these five dimensions into a program:

1. Acknowledge the pain of cultural oppression.
2. Employ acts of cultural acceptance — ability to maintain a balanced perspective about one’s talents, successes and failures. Try to emphasize the positives to buoy

their spirits since they have been so marginalized.

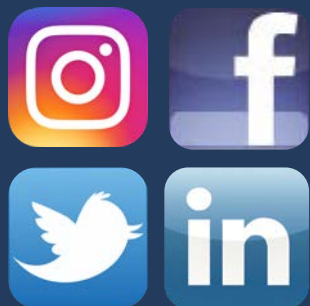
3. Act with cultural reverence. This requires that counselors think/listen/act from the heart and bring forth feelings of wonderment regarding how people bring meaning into their lives.
4. Engage in mutuality — cultural kinship — appropriate sharing of common experiences.
5. Possess the capacity to “not know” and be culturally open. The client is the true expert on their lives so tap into the expert knowledge they possess.

Overall, there needs to be new ways in which we approach treatment for POC. There must be real awareness of social and economic justice and understanding of past traumas (Adverse Childhood Experiences - ACES screening). Dr. Haskins stressed that we need to acknowledge the pathologies along with the resilience and keep stressing prevention.



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Northern Light

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Understanding Problem Gambling Through:
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