

SPECIALTY COURT PROVIDES ALTERNATIVE FOR THOSE COMMITTING GAMBLING-RELATED CRIMES

In Nevada, there's an alternative for individuals who commit crimes – such as theft or fraud – that are motivated by their gambling addiction. The state has the nation's only Gambling Treatment Diversion Court (GTDC), which gives these individuals an option to pursue treatment if they plead guilty to nonviolent crimes.

The GTDC is modeled after drug treatment courts, which have proven successful around the country and are now in approximately half the nation's counties. The Nevada court follows a pilot project in Amherst, New York.

The idea of specialty courts dates back to the 1960s during the Kennedy administration when prisons were getting too crowded, the cost of incarceration was high and rates of recidivism were significant. The theory behind the GTDC is that individuals can get the treatment they need, cease gambling, pay restitution to the aggrieved party, and go on to become productive members of society.

The process for enrolling in the GTDC system begins with a guilty plea in a criminal court. An assessment is then performed to confirm the existence of a gambling addiction and that the crime or crimes committed ultimately stemmed from the gambling addiction. Once the request to enroll is accepted, the applicant must pay a fee and commit to attending the GTDC at a prescribed frequency for a period of up to three years.

During this period of time, the individual must also wear a GPS device to ensure they don't visit casinos or other places where gambling activity takes place. They must also consent to random drug tests. While many gambling addicts may not be drug users, the drug tests help ward off any "addiction switching" that may occur as a result of ending the gambling addiction.

Court sessions ensure accountability and provide opportunities for support group meetings. Program participants must also work one-on-one with a mental health practitioner specializing in gambling addiction. The participant must pay for this counseling, although loans and grants are available for those who can't afford it. Should participants fail to meet the requirements or drop out early, they must serve the original sentence for their crime.

Judge Cheryl Moss has been the driving force in establishing the GTDC in Nevada. On the podcast "All In: The Addicted Gambler's Podcast," Judge Moss noted that she historically had about a dozen cases a year in family court that related to gambling addiction. As a result, she decided to order gambling assessments in certain custody and divorce cases.

According to Judge Moss, it's been proven that specialty courts, such as the gambling diversion court, work. And it also saves the cost of incarceration, which in Nevada is approximately \$24,000 per year per individual.

While the success of a gambling court is

apparent, the challenge is getting judges to learn about it and appreciate its benefits to both the individual and the state. In addition to educating judges, it's also important that criminal defense attorneys learn about the court so their clients know it's an option.

The reception to the specialty court among those in the gambling industry and casinos seems favorable according to Judge Moss. She notes that some of the court's participants have been casino employees, so the possibility for restitution rather than prison means the casinos will recoup at least some of their losses.

But in the end, more than financial restitution, it seems the option provided by the GTDC fulfills a moral imperative to demonstrate compassion and understanding. As Judge Moss says, "It gives people from all walks of life a second chance to be productive citizens."

Note: the state of New Jersey currently has two bills being considered to introduce gambling courts similar to the Nevada model. Action is expected on the bills later this year.

To help generate interest and awareness for such a court in Minnesota, Judge Moss suggests asking your congressman, senator or assemblyman to amend the state statute. It's also helpful to spread the word to judges and help them realize that it's possible to create such a court — and that it can be successful.



Susan Sheridan Tucker
Executive Director
NPGA

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Optimism In the New (Fiscal) Year

January is typically the time we reassess the past year and set New Year's resolutions. But in NPGA's world, July is our new year, when (with hope) the state budget is passed and we reflect on the past year while anticipating what the new fiscal has in store — making new connections and continuing to build our influence in advocating for those with a gambling disorder and their families.

Our plans in fiscal year 2021 were mostly dictated by COVID-19. While we made the necessary pivots embracing all things "Zoom" and managed to stay virus-free, we witnessed the quickening pace of legislatures across the country passing sports betting and online gaming statutes to address depleted state revenues and an apparent unquenchable thirst to bet in ways well beyond the outcome of the game. Minnesota held off on considering either of the multiple bills introduced this past session, but now that Wisconsin rocked the experts by signing a new sports betting compact on July 1, it seems only a matter of time before Minnesota follows suit. NPGA will continue advocating for specific consumer protections as legislators consider Minnesota's sports betting framework.

A new year also can mean new beginnings with staff. In early August, Sonja Mertz will join us as our community educator. Sonja's experience as a certified research prevention specialist at the Minnesota Prevention Resource Center, among other life experiences, will enable NPGA to broaden our outreach efforts around the state. Sonja has worked with schools and other community groups in prevention efforts relating to substance use. We will also be saying goodbye to some long-term board members and welcoming new members. We'll have more on that in a future issue, but I'm grateful to all who have served and are willing to serve this organization with commitment and passion for our mission.

Each year tends to reveal its unique character based on the projects pursued and unfolding events. What I can foresee at this early stage is greater attention to sports betting legislation in Minnesota, celebrating NPGA's twentieth anniversary, reviving our state-wide conference after a two-year hiatus (save the date: November 16) and positioning ourselves to build broader prevention networks. We greet fiscal year 2022 with hope and enthusiasm.

Happy New Year,

Susan Sheridan Tucker

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We thank all our members, donors, volunteers and affiliates who have contributed to our mission.

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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



Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Academy Brings Gambling Awareness to Youth of Color

For the next several issues of Northern Light, we'll profile organizations that have received grants from Minnesota's Department of Human Services (DHS) and detail how they are using them to increase awareness about problem gambling. Our first feature focuses on the Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Academy.

The Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Academy (MNYA) is taking a three-pronged approach to their efforts to raise awareness about gambling to youth of color in North Minneapolis.

The first part is the creation of a video, released on Memorial Day weekend, that focuses on the concept of risk and making good choices. The video is viewable on <https://justaskmn.org/> and was produced in collaboration with Danami, Russell Herder, Minnesota Prep Academy and the Minnesota DHS.

The second phase involves distributing the video through social media so that it reaches youth in the way they access information using their devices — everything from TikTok to Facebook. In addition to raising awareness, the goal is to start a conversation about gambling and related choices.

The third phase of the work will be the

creation of a curriculum that goes with the video and for MNYA to become the entity that connects people to the help they need. This is in response to the fact that many websites detail problem gambling from an adult perspective rather than a youth perspective. This will include a youth-led focus group so that more information can be gained about what youth are doing with sports betting. The perspective will not be just with casinos, shooting dice, dominos, etc., but will also include how youth are accessing sites such as FanDuel.

“The grant has been wonderful for us as a starter,” says Donnell Bratton, founder and executive director of Minnesota Preparatory Academy. (The Minnesota Preparatory Academy is partnering with the Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Academy.) It’s really allowed us to raise awareness about gambling to youth of color in North Minneapolis.

An unexpected benefit has been that the work has helped educate adults about what young people are experiencing. “We didn’t know it would turn out like this, so we’re really excited. This has given us a much deeper appreciation for how gambling can affect young people for the future,” says Donnell. “We heard so many stories we didn’t really expect, such as some kids thinking about gambling to provide money for their mother.”

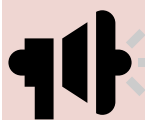
One important eye-opener for youth was learning that they jeopardize sports scholarships if they participate in sports betting. Some can also lose jobs if they are caught gambling.

In partnership with other community organizations, the information learned from MNYA’s gambling awareness efforts is also being communicated to other at-risk groups, including Asian Americans through Asia Media Access.

National Sports Legislative Update - May 2021

The following legislative update regarding sports betting developments across the country was prepared by Patrick Willard, Director of Policy and Advocacy for the National Council on Problem Gambling.

As lawmakers headed into the Memorial Day holiday, **Connecticut**, **Florida**, and **Nebraska** passed sports betting proposals and boosted the total number of states with gambling expansions to 30 since the Supreme Court's decision in *Murphy v. NCAA* three years ago.



At the Buzzer

The Nutmeg State completed action just before midnight on May 25

when the **Connecticut** Senate adopted the sports betting proposal that was hammered out between Gov. Ned Lamont and the Mashantucket Pequot tribe and the Mohegan tribe earlier in the year. The legislation included an additional \$1 million in funding from the state lottery

for the state's Chronic Gamblers Fund, and codified the \$500,000 contribution from the tribes to the fund.

The agreement must be approved by the U.S. Department of Interior pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act before it will be official. The Connecticut plan is the third passed in this year's legislative sessions involving an agreement between a governor and state tribes. The other agreements were in Arizona and Florida.

Cornhusker college games won't be on the board, but **Nebraska** ended up including sports betting in implementing the referendums adopted by voters in 2020. There will not be online sports betting, but it will be allowed in brick and mortar casinos. The legislation also included dedicated funding of 2.5 percent of revenues for the Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund, which is estimated to generate \$1.2 million per year beginning in fiscal year 2022.



In Overtime

Florida lawmakers were nearing the end of their regular session just as Gov. Ron DeSantis announced a new

compact with the Seminole Tribe that would open up sports betting and online gaming to the Sunshine State. Legislators decided to take up ratification of the compact in a special session rather than

try to cram it into the final week of the session.

The new compact makes no apparent changes in the current level of funding for problem gambling funds for the state despite greatly expanding gambling opportunities. As presented, it would maintain the annual donation by the Seminole Tribe to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling of \$250,000 per facility. The compact will now need

approval from the U.S. Department of Interior.

On the northern end of the East Coast, **Maine's** legislature is also in a special session. Lawmakers hope to avoid the outcome in 2019 when a proposal was vetoed by Gov. Janet Mills. If no agreement is reached in the next week the measure may move to the legislature's 2022 session.



The Clock Ran Out

Three states that began sessions with momentum for sports betting proposals ran out of

steam before adjournment. **Alabama**, **Missouri** and **Kansas** all ended their sessions with bills looking for votes. In Alabama and Kansas the legislation passed in one chamber, but was unable to move in the other. That brings to nine the number

of states (AL, GA, HI, KS, KY, MO, ND, SC, VT) where bills were introduced but failed to pass this year. It is expected that **Texas** will join this list when it adjourns at the end of the month.



No Picnic

Meanwhile, one state was experiencing a belly ache after gobbling up its first gambling

expansion in 2019. The Volunteer State passed its sports betting law without the benefit of any experience with casinos, racetracks or other brick and mortar gambling experience. This year, some **Tennessee** lawmakers thought the state

bit off more than it could chew. They decided to turnover regulation of its sports betting laws to an advisory council after hiccups in the oversight of operators by the state lottery earlier in the year.



Still In-Play

Legislative sessions are wrapping up, but will continue into June for Louisiana, Massachusetts and Ohio. **Louisiana** lawmakers are moving forward with sports betting legislation that was approved by voters in a 2020 referendum. A measure setting tax rates for the operators has passed both chambers and a second bill putting the

wagering regulations in place is awaiting adoption in the House to move to the governor.

In **Ohio**, a comprehensive expansion of gambling options from the Select Gaming Committee is running into opposition from sports teams and others who feel the requirements of the legislation would limit their ability to take part. The Problem Gambling Network of Ohio continues to speak out on responsible gambling issues before the

panel as it heads to consideration by the end of June.

Massachusetts lawmakers are looking at budget amendments that may include additional sports betting revenue. More than a dozen sports betting bills have been filed, but no hearings have been held on the legislation in the Bay State on specifics of gambling expansions. Gov. Charlie Baker supports sports betting, but lawmakers have been unable to agree on how it could be implemented.



Minnesota Legislative Update

Minnesota Sports Betting

The 2021 Minnesota legislative session saw three sports betting bills introduced. None made any significant progress, as Minnesota tribes were not currently supportive of negotiating a new compact.

Charitable Gambling

Near session-ending legislation was introduced by the Minnesota Indian Gaming Association (MIGA) to ensure electronic pull-tab and bingo games comply with the intent of the 2012 authorizing statute, which permitted electronic versions to mimic the paper games. However, MIGA contests that over time, pull-tab and bingo game design has evolved closer to mimicking games that are supposed to be exclusive to tribal gaming. Additionally, these charitable gambling games have grown quite popular and have significantly increased generated revenue for the state, charitable entities and for the bars and restaurants that offer them. The bill's purpose is to respect the intent of the original 2012 statute. The bill did not pass this session. (Full disclosure: NPGA receives 1/2 of 1% of the tax revenue generated from pull-tabs. Representatives from MIGA and Allied Charities are both members of our board of directors.)



News Flash – Wisconsin Moves to Allow Sports Betting

In a complete surprise to those carefully watching the expansion of sports betting, Wisconsin Governor Evers signed a sports betting compact with the Oneida tribe on July 1, 2021. The deal will allow bets on professional sports, including football, basketball, hockey, baseball and soccer. Bettors can also wager on college sports, but not in-state programs such as the University of Wisconsin.

The compact with the Oneida tribe also allows betting on the Academy Awards. Wisconsin would be one of the first states to permit betting on the Oscars and other awards programs.

Sovereign tribes and state governments are permitted by federal law to reach deals that outline specific betting options. Wisconsin is one of the first states to strike such a deal without involvement from the state legislature. The new compact allows the tribe to open retail sportsbooks at their casinos. The federal Department of the Interior has 45 days from the official receipt of the new compact to approve the legal avenues that would permit sports betting. If approved, the Oneida Nation said it will look to open its first sportsbook by the 2021 football season.

IN THEIR OWN

Words

Jan's Story



The first time I started to think I might have a gambling addiction was when it was suggested to me by my manager at work. She saw

that I enjoyed talking to coworkers about my gambling — even laughing off my appreciable losses. Until then, I didn't give it all that much thought.

I was taken a little off guard by my manager's comment, in which she actually asked me to watch how much I talked about gambling in the workplace because coworkers might think I had an addiction. But the message hit home for me — she was telling me I should consider that I had an addiction.

At my very next therapy appointment after that conversation I used my therapist's phone to call the gambling helpline. I knew it was time.

Although I was decisive in seeking help once my manager talked to me — and I took the initial homework assignments very seriously — I still had relapses in the first several years while going to Gambler's Anonymous (GA). And while I know that others might not return to GA after relapsing, I was struck by the welcoming, nonjudgmental outlook they shared, and so I never missed a meeting.

Two things motivated me to become more steadfast in my recovery. When visiting my father for six weeks before he died of

cancer, I had to drive right past the casino. But despite the stress of my father's health and his proximity to the casino, I never gambled.

At my very next therapy appointment after that conversation I used my therapist's phone to call the gambling helpline. I knew it was time.

The second motivator was the lingering feeling I had the last time I gambled. I distinctly remember how I wanted to drive my car into a wall to kill myself. I didn't wish to revisit that awful feeling, and I also knew that my father would not want me to do that.

Over the years, I've learned about the various situations with other problem gamblers. Our stories always have similarities and differences. Unlike a lot of others, I never lied, cheated or stole. I was always honest with people and confessed when I had relapses. I'm also lucky because I never dipped into retirement savings, though I can only wonder how much more I'd have saved had I not spent so much money gambling.

With the work I've done to overcome my

gambling addiction along with various other addictions, I'm very familiar with many of the processes, including the 12 steps. In my work in the social services industry, I'm able to provide insights to people when I share my own story.

I encourage others to replace gambling with another activity. And if drinking is also an addiction for them, I tell them to replace alcohol with another beverage of choice that they always have on hand. I also encourage people to reward themselves with jewelry or something else as they reach clean milestones to keep them going.

In August, I will have ten years clean from gambling. I live what some might call a boring 12-step life, but I've never been happier and more optimistic about my future.

Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

Visit www.minnesotaga.com to find meetings for those with compulsive gambling problems as well as meetings for family and friends.

NCPG LAUNCHES "OPERATION RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING" TO PREVENT GAMBLING PROBLEMS IN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) recently announced the launch of 'Operation Responsible Gambling,' supported by Entain Foundation US and RG24seven. Operation Responsible Gambling (OpRG) is designed to assist members of the military community in gambling responsibly, and also to ensure they have options to seek help if they show signs of gambling problems.

Keith Whyte, NCPG Executive Director, stated, "We know that active-duty personnel and veterans face higher risks for gambling problems so Operation Responsible Gambling provides access to help, information and veterans' video testimonials aimed specially at the military community. The information will be available on social media and a micro-website." The first two videos feature stories from veterans in their own words, talking about their gambling issues during their service and the road to recovery through the Veterans Administration gambling services.

"The research is clear that members of the military community are at higher risk for gambling problems, yet military community members may not know what to do or where to go," says Keith. "We want to make sure they know there is hope and help available."

Visit OperationResponsibleGambling.org to view the video testimonials and to find information and help on the risks for gambling problems in the military community.



ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Why belong to the Alliance?

You can make NGPA'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 Northstarpg.org/membership.

SILVER



Treasure Island Casino

GOLD



Shakopee Mdewakanton
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Running Aces



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