



**PROBLEM GAMBLING  
AWARENESS MONTH**

**March 2023**

**An Awareness Toolkit for Community  
Health Organizations, Providers,  
and Preventionists**



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

*The Maryland Center of Excellence  
on Problem Gambling*



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## Introduction and Overview

**Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM)**, held each March, is a grassroots public awareness and outreach campaign created and sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling to educate the public and ally with healthcare professionals on problem gambling. The focus is to elicit discussions and to *"Have the Conversation"* about the risks of gambling, the signs of problem gambling, and the resources available nationally and here in Maryland to provide help, hope and recovery for individuals and their families.

*"Have the Conversation"* is more than just all talk. It is an opportunity for an open dialogue and candid discussion to bring awareness to gambling behaviors and resources available within your community if an individual's gambling becomes problematic. It is also an opportunity to promote action within your organization for integrating problem gambling and gambling disorder into your existing treatment and recovery services.

The Center is committed to reducing stigma and making resources available for help and hope to those and their families in Maryland who suffer in silence from this hidden addiction. For the third year, the Center is expanding its awareness activities by encouraging all organizations to participate in **National Gambling Disorder Screening Day on Tuesday, March 14, 2023**.

This March, we invite you to join us in promoting **AWARENESS** of problem gambling and taking **ACTION** to foster the health and well-being of Maryland residents.

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**To print: this guide was designed to be printed double sided, long edge.**

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide is a compilation of information provided by the Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), and other National organizations.



### Promote AWARENESS

This March join the Center to promote **AWARENESS** within your organization and your community about the risks of gambling and the resources available to provide help and hope.

Display PGAM awareness flyers on your bulletin boards. We have included in this Guide 8½ x 11 flyers specifically for PGAM that you can print. Flyers can also be sent electronically in e-newsletters or e-mails.

Add the PGAM logo on your website. Visit the official website, <https://www.ncpgambling.org/pgam/> for logos and other reference links.

Create a PGAM email signature for your organization. We have included samples in this Guide.

Include an article on sports betting awareness or youth gambling in your monthly newsletter or communications blog. Sample articles are found in this guide.

The Center can provide additional awareness materials at no cost for your organization, including flyers, rack cards, and business-sized cards with problem gambling prevention and helpline messaging. Complete the Public Awareness Materials Form attached in this Guide, and email it to [info@mdproblemgambling.com](mailto:info@mdproblemgambling.com) or Michael Kafes, Communications Manager ([mkafes@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:mkafes@som.umaryland.edu)).

Use the QR code on materials that will send those in need directly to the help seeker website, [www.helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://www.helpmygamblingproblem.org).





## Take ACTION

- Utilize your organizations' social media and post messages each day/each week during March. Suggested messages are included in this Guide.
- Organize and/or participate in in-person or virtual community events. The Center can provide materials and staff participation.
- Invite the Center's Peer Recovery Support Specialists to present to recovery groups.
- Participate in National Gambling Disorder Screening Day on March 14, 2023. Contact the Center's Clinical Manager, Kristen Beall, LCSW-C, ICGC-I, CAC-AD (667-214-2123, [krbeall@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:krbeall@som.umaryland.edu)) for more information and to have a conversation on how your organization can integrate problem gambling screening tools into its current protocols.

<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Problem-Gambling-Screening-Guide-v.1-7-18-22.pdf>

- Utilize Peer Support Specialists for individuals (from the Center) and for families (from Maryland Coalition of Families) struggling with gambling problems. Peers can help navigate resources and remove barriers on the road to treatment and recovery.
- Visit the Center's website [mdproblemgambling.com](http://mdproblemgambling.com) for additional resources.



## Sample Article/Blog Post

### Article #1 Sports Betting

#### **Did You Place a Mobile Bet on the Big Football Game? How about the Upcoming NCAA Tournament?**

In Maryland it was possible to bet on the color of the Gatorade used to celebrate winning the big football game. There were also many in-game bets that could be placed in real-time. Now we are moving on to the NCAA Tournament where, for the first time, Marylanders will have the opportunity to place a mobile bet on the basketball tournament.

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM). During this month we promote the importance of preventing underage gambling for youth and problem gambling for adults. With the onset of mobile betting, it is important to realize the increased risks, signs of a problem while betting, and tips for gambling responsibly.

Mobile betting may be riskier for some:

- Bets can be placed at a very fast pace
- Bets can be placed using a mobile device increasing access
- Incentives are offered for betting

Signs of a gambling problem:

- Unable to stop or take a break
- Gambling to try to win money
- Using gambling to cope with problems
- Gambling while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Chasing losses
- Lying to family about gambling activity

Tips for safe mobile sports betting:

- Bet using apps that are licensed to operate in Maryland
- Educate yourself on sports betting terminology and how to read sports stats. Understand the types of betting and odds of winning.
- Use betting timers and limit setting tools on daily, weekly, or monthly deposits, losses, and wager amounts available through sports betting apps.
- Know that parlays are riskier than other types of sports betting due to decreased odds of winning.



- Want to block gambling sites for a limited time or completely? Free or low-cost options are available through [BetBlocker](#) or [GamBan](#).
- Want to self-exclude from mobile betting or other forms of gambling in Maryland? For more information visit: <https://www.mdgamblinghelp.org/problem-gambling-info/voluntary-exclusion-program/>
- Bet what you can afford to lose and for entertainment.

This PGAM, have the conversation with a family member, a neighbor, a friend, or those you serve at your workplace. If someone needs help with a gambling problem, have them call, text, or chat 1-800-GAMBLER or visit [www.helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://www.helpmygamblingproblem.org)

Please contact the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling at [info@mdproblemgambling.com](mailto:info@mdproblemgambling.com) or call 667-214-2120 for more information.

## **Article #2 Youth Gambling**

### **From Claw Machines to Video Gaming to Sports Betting, Is It Possible to Eliminate Gambling Activities from Children and Teens?**

What child does not love a trip to the arcade? Is this the first introduction to a child to gambling behavior? Claw machines and other popular games meet the definition of gambling. Gambling is the staking or risking of something of value upon the outcome of a contest, a sporting event, or game subject to chance, upon an agreement or understanding that something of value will be received in the event of a certain outcome (Legal Information Institute, 2023). A claw machine: buy tokens with money, put the tokens in the game, win or lose a stuffed animal or other prize. What child has not gambled?

This question was posed to high school students at a recent presentation on problem gambling. Of all the three classes asked, not one student could think of a way to avoid gambling completely. There are so many gambling activities, raffles and informal “I bet you a dollar that I can eat that hot red pepper.” It is often not done with a thought as it is so ingrained in our culture.

It may be impossible to eliminate gambling altogether for children and teens, but we can try to decrease gambling activities as much as possible for the younger population and educate them on the risks of gambling. Research shows the earlier a person starts gambling, the more likely they are to develop a gambling problem (NCPG, 2023). The first step is to educate youth on the minimum age for participating in legal gambling activities such as lottery, casino gambling, and sports betting. This is an opportunity to open the discussion as to why gambling is risky for those who are young. Similar to substance use, gambling addiction is more likely to occur in younger



populations due to the brain not being fully developed until age 25 (Arain, M., et. al., 2013). Risk factors for problem gambling in younger populations include: having a parent with a gambling problem; early first age of gambling; increased impulsivity; and having substance use or mental health disorder (Wiber, M. et. al, 2006). Just like with adults, gambling can be used as a negative coping strategy for stress and mental health problems. Did the mental health problem occur and gambling was used to cope or did gambling start first leading to increased anxiety and/or depression?

Then add to the mix the popularity of video gaming. Video games may contain loot boxes that are like virtual gambling. Money or virtual currency can be used to purchase a mystery box with an uncertain outcome. Youth and parents are often unaware that these features exist in video games. Video games are rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). Games rated “M” for Mature or “A” for adult are more likely to contain gambling features within the game. Any game purchased that contains gambling features should include a warning label, “Warning: In Game Purchases, includes random items” (ESRB, 2023).

Finally, our kids are now exposed to sports betting at a young age. Youth are exposed to ads for sports betting that contain enticing incentives to participate. Sports betting is now legal in 32 States, expanding quickly, all within the last few years (American Gaming Association, 2023) Sports betting is easily accessible in many states through a mobile platform. Bets can be placed continuously throughout games which increases the excitement and may lead to more spending. Even though there is a minimum age to bet, it is still unknown how well age verification software will work to prevent youth from accessing sports betting.

With all of this going on, it still goes back to conversations and education on the topic. Parents or those who work with youth can have conversations about the risks of gambling at a young age. Education on gambling can be included with education on mental health and substance use disorders in health classes or in other educational programs. More research needs to be done on the impact of gambling expansion on our youth.

When educating youth on the risks of gambling, discuss the possible negative outcomes:

1. Losing things of value.
2. Owing others.
3. Getting into fights.
4. Trouble with parents, police, people owed money.
5. Declining grades.
6. Feeling pressured to lie or steal.
7. Not getting along with or hurting people you love.





How will it affect youth mental health?

1. Loss of interest in activities.
2. Not wanting to spend time with family and friends.
3. Feeling that you can't control behavior.
4. Feeling irritable when you can't gamble.
5. Changes in mood such as feeling lonely, depressed, anxious, and/or stuck.
6. Gambling addiction.

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month. This March have the conversation about the risks of gambling with the youth and young adults in your family or those who you serve.

Sources:

Adolescent Gambling, Psychiatry, 2006 Oct <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2945873/>

American Gaming Association <https://www.americangaming.org/>

Definition of Gambling, Cornell Law School. 31 U.S. Code 5362, [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu)

Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) <https://www.esrb.org/>

Maturation of the Adolescent Brain, 2013, Arain, M.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3621648/#:~:text=The%20development%20and%20maturation%20of%20the%20prefrontal%20cortex%20occurs%20primarily,helps%20accomplish%20executive%20brain%20functions.>

National Council on Problem Gambling, Gift Responsibly Campaign, 2022.

<https://www.ncpgambling.org/programs-resources/gift-responsibly-campaign/>



## Email Signatures

Signature ideas to add into your organization's email or post them on your Facebook page:

### PGAM Email Signature #1:



This March be **AWARE** of the risks of gambling  
And take **ACTION** for help and hope.

HELPLINE: **1-800-GAMBLER** ~ [helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://helpmygamblingproblem.org)

### PGAM Email Signature #2:



Think you, or someone you  
know, may have a gambling  
problem? Call: **1-800-GAMBLER**  
today and speak with  
"Someone who has been there."

### PGAM Email Signature #3:



**March 2023 is**

**PROBLEM GAMBLING  
AWARENESS MONTH**

**Take Action**



## PGAM LOGOS

Utilize the PGAM logo on your website and social media. PGAM Logo formats can be found on <https://www.ncpgambling.org/pgam/>.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

### Like Us:

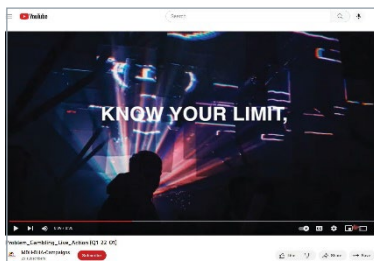
We invite you to engage with and share the Center's social media messaging in March:

- Like us and share our posts on [FACEBOOK](#)
- Follow us and retweet our posts on [TWITTER](#) and
- Follow us [INSTAGRAM](#) and share our pos
- Subscribe, like, and watch our videos on [YOUTUBE](#)

### Share Video:

Use this link to share: [https://youtu.be/KRc3pv-L\\_sQ](https://youtu.be/KRc3pv-L_sQ)

Use this HTML code to embed the video:



```
<iframe width="570" height="321"
src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/KRc3pv-L_sQ"
title="Problem_Gambling_Live_Action (Q1-22-01)" frameborder="0"
allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media;
gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share" allowfullscreen></iframe>
```



## Posting Examples:



March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month.

Learn more about this hidden addiction.

#PGAM2023 #MDCEPG #ProblemGambling

<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/pgam-2023/>



Does your doctor ask you about your gambling? They should—screening helps. Tuesday, March 8th, is Gambling Disorder Screening Day – learn how to host your own Screening Day!

#PGAM2023 #MDCEPG #ProblemGambling #ScreeningDay #NoCostTreatment

<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/gambling-disorder-screening-2023/>



It is estimated that 1 in 10 Americans will complete a tournament bracket and the median size of a wager on a game outcome was \$30. If you bet, are your wagers higher than the norm?

#PGAM2023 #ProblemGambling #MDCEPG #MarchMadness #NCAA

<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/march-2023/>



Family history of problem gambling?

You could be at risk.

If you or someone you know is struggling, we can help you.

#PGAM2023 #MDCEPG #ProblemGambling #NoCostTreatment

<https://helpmygamblingproblem.org/>



For additional information on the resources listed in this Guide, please contact:

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# This March, take the “madness” out of Sports Betting

The 2023 NCAA Basketball tournament begins on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Excitement is building, and many look forward to completing tournament brackets, whether sponsored by an organization or through friends.



**For most**, completing and “betting” on March basketball brackets is a fun, competitive group activity. But **for some**, this activity may be part of a more problematic approach to gambling.

## Here are some tips to take the madness out of March Tournaments:

- Only gamble what you can afford to lose – set a limit and stay within it!
- Don’t chase your losses – by wagering on tournaments to win back money.
- Limit alcohol use – alcohol can impair your ability to make healthy decisions.
- Participate with friends – avoid gambling when you are alone or depressed.
- Take a break – if you begin to feel angry, anxious, or out of control.

If gambling is causing problems for you or anyone you know call or text the Maryland Helpline  
**1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)** Scan the QR code below  
or visit **[www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)**



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# This March Take Action

Talk about gambling  
with someone who's  
been there...  
someone who can  
help...



If you feel like your gambling is out of control,  
talk to a *Peer Recovery Support Specialist*.  
Peers can help you and your loved ones navigate  
resources and remove barriers on the road to  
recovery from gambling related problems.

Call or text the Maryland Helpline  
**1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)**  
Scan the QR code below or visit  
**[www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)**



# **March 14, 2023**

## **Gambling Disorder Screening Day**

Gambling problems  
often go undetected.

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A problem gambler will  
affect 7-10 people  
in their immediate circle.

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People can become  
addicted to gambling.

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Recovery from gambling  
problems is possible.



Problem gambling SCREENING can open the door to a conversation about someone's gambling activities and provide a direct connection to helpful resources like "no cost" treatment for Maryland residents.

**FREE & CONFIDENTIAL SCREENING 24/7**

Call or text the Maryland Helpline

**1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)**

Scan the QR code below or visit: [www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)



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# Gambling activities could become a problem

It's not just an  
individual problem  
It affects the whole  
family



Be **AWARE** of the risks ~ Take a **BREAK** ~ Have a **PLAN**

If **gambling** is causing **problems** for you...

or anyone you know

Call or text the Maryland Helpline

**1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)**

Scan the QR code below or visit

**[www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)**



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## Peer Recovery Support Specialists

The Maryland Center of Excellence  
on Problem Gambling

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling (the Center) offers Peer Recovery Support Specialists at no cost to help individuals seeking to limit, control or stop their gambling. The Center's Peers have lived experience with addiction and have been in recovery a minimum of two years. They are trained in how to assist those seeking help with gambling behaviors by providing access to treatment, connecting them to resources, and supporting them with encouragement during the recovery process.

If you, or someone who know, is struggling with problems due to gambling behavior, call the **Maryland Helpline** today at **1-800-GAMBLER** or visit **HelpMyGamblingProblem.org**.



### Eastern Shore

**Kenneth (Kenny) Crawford**, CPRS, CRC, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist  
Office: 667-214-2135; Cell: 443-717-1137; Email: [kenneth.crawford@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:kenneth.crawford@som.umaryland.edu)



### Baltimore City

**James (Jim) Nowlin**, CPRS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist  
Office: 667-214-2134; Cell: 410-299-1791; Email: [jnowlin@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:jnowlin@som.umaryland.edu)



### Northeast Central Maryland

**Kenneth (Ken) Wolfson**, CPRS, CRC, RPS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist  
Office: 667-214-2133; Cell: 443-690-9811; Email: [kwolfson@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:kwolfson@som.umaryland.edu)



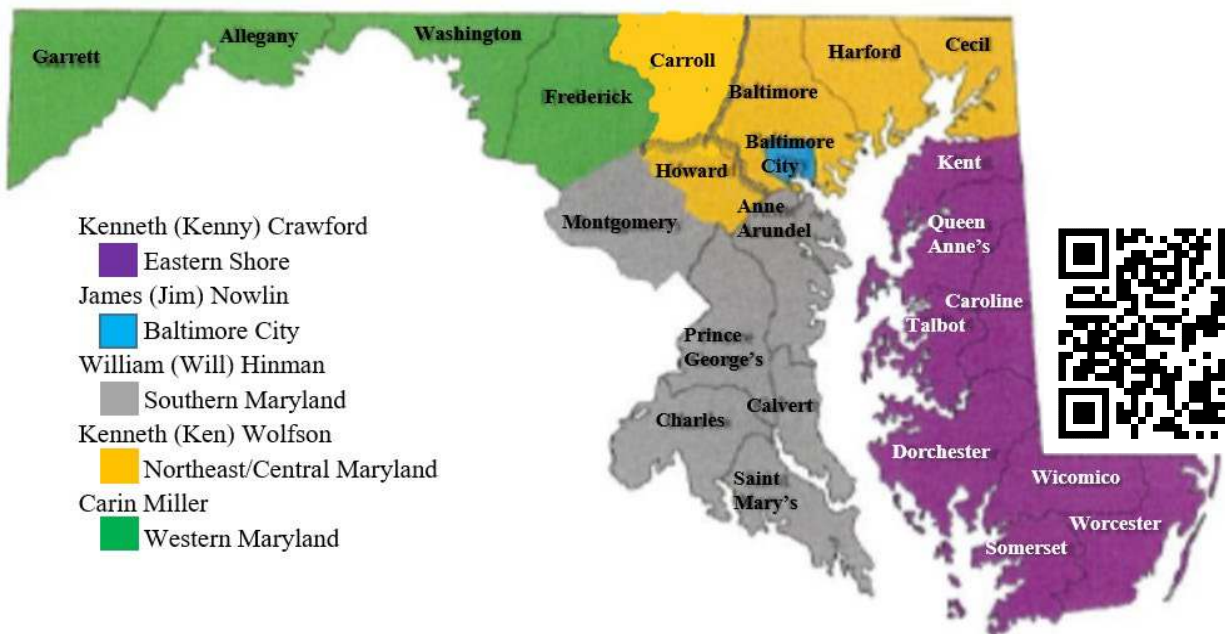
### Southern Maryland

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### Western Maryland

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The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

Main: 667-214-2120 ~ Fax: 410-799-4396 ~ [www.mdproblemgambling.com](http://www.mdproblemgambling.com)

250 W. Pratt Street, Suite #1050, Baltimore, MD 21201

# No Cost Treatment Now Available for Anyone Wanting Help for a Gambling Problem



***Counseling for gambling problems at no cost to Maryland residents is available for anyone seeking help regardless of insurance coverage, financial status, or ability to pay.***

Financial support through the Problem Gambling Fund, managed by the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration, supports this effort to remove the barriers to treatment for anyone with a gambling disorder

**Individuals and/or family members can receive help for a gambling problem without adding any additional financial burden**

**Call the Center if you are a provider interested in joining the Maryland Problem Gambling Provider Referral Network (667) 214-2120**

**If you or someone you know is gambling problematically or struggling with gambling addiction, call, text or chat:**

**1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537) or visit  
[www.helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://www.helpmygamblingproblem.org)**



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# HAVE THE CONVERSATION... **1-800-GAMBLER**

About the risks of  
gambling and...

**How to keep  
gambling safe**

**Call, Text** (1-800-426-2537)  
**or Chat** ([HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://HelpMyGamblingProblem.org))



- Confidential, 24-7
- Knowledgeable listeners
- Resources for help and information
- Referrals to counselors

**[HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)**



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