

1♥800♦GAMBLER

News from The Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia

Fall 2008

“Asking my Grandkids for Money to Gamble was a Low Point”



John is a 62-year-old retired electrician from Huntington, WV. John is a likeable man who enjoys woodworking and playing with his grandkids. He served in the US Army in Korea. For years, nightmares about combat kept him awake at night. Then, something else began keeping him up at night. John's sleep was haunted not just by images of helicopters swirling overhead, but by the incessant visions and sounds of the computerized machines that had taken control of his life. John could not sleep because he was thinking about his addiction to “poker machines”.

Gambling addiction caused John to do things he never believed he would do, including neglecting to pay his bills, borrowing and then stealing from his family, running up credit cards, writing bad checks, spending all his savings, selling his prized possessions, and filing bankruptcy. John lived only on a VA pension, but he spent almost \$50,000 on gambling. John was broke, his wife of over 30 years left him, and he decided to kill himself.

On October 18, 2005, after a suicide attempt, John was sent to the Veteran's Administration's program at Brecksville, OH and locked in a psychiatric unit for two weeks. While there

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OVER 7000 CALLS FOR HELP TO 1-800-GAMBLER



The Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia recently passed two significant milestones. The program has now been taking calls for eight years, and has helped over 7000 callers.

The program has released data from all callers to the help-line, up to the end of last fiscal year. Calls came in from all over the state, with the largest number, 1,141, coming from Kanawha County. This is more than twice the number of calls coming from Wood County, which was second in calls to the help-line. The data includes such factors as gender, age, type of gambling, amount of gambling debt, occupation, marital status, and educational level of the gambler.

The report shows that most people in West Virginia who call the help-line are addicted to electronic gaming machines, either in local bars and restaurants, or at one of the state's four tracks. Most are in debt due to their gambling, and many admit to committing illegal acts, including writing bad checks, to finance their gambling. To view the complete data set, please visit 1800GAMBLER.net.

Weekend Treatment is a Success

This past June, the Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV hosted a free weekend intensive treatment program for problem gamblers and their loved ones. Twenty-nine participants took part in individual consultations and a multitude of workshops including:

- How Slot Machines Really Work
- Getting Out of Gambling Debt
- Compassionate Communication
- 12 Steps to Recovery
- How Problem Gambling Effects Families
- Starting a Gamblers Anonymous/Gam Anon Meeting

The weekend was such a success that another one is planned for the Spring in the northern part of the state. If you are interested in participating in this free program please call 1-800-GAMBLER.

Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia Staff

Steve Burton, MSW, LGSW, NCGC
Program Director

Sheila Moran, MSW, LSW, NCGC
Director of Quality Assurance

Michele Gordon, MSW, LGSW
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Jennifer Davis Walton, MA
Clinical Coordinator

Julie Osborne, MSW, LSW
Clinical Coordinator

Gloria Kirk
Administrative Assistant

Visit our new website,
1800GAMBLER.net
for up to date news on our program, and more detailed information about help for problem gamblers in West Virginia

“Asking my Grandkids for Money”

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he realized for the first time he had a gambling problem. Afterwards, he participated in a four-week-long program for gambling addiction. Upon return home, he began gambling again four weeks later.

Fortunately, that was not the end of John's story. John called 1-800-Gambler to get help for his gambling addiction, and now he wants to share what happened to him, in hopes that others struggling with this disorder will call for help. We asked John about the details of his addiction and recovery:

Q. Do you remember the first time you ever gambled?

It was about six years ago on the machines at the local Moose.

Q. Did anyone in your family have a gambling addiction?

My mom. She played Bingo every night. She spent every penny she could get her hands on playing it. She never did get help.

Q. Did you have any big wins, and how did that impact you?

I remember I won sixteen hundred dollars once. I didn't say a word to anyone about it. I just put all of it right back in the machine.

Q. What was the impact of your gambling on your family?

My wife left me. We had been married 30 years. I've worked hard to gain her trust back-we just got re-married last month.

Q. What was your lowest point?

When I tried to kill myself was obviously the very lowest-but I still remember another low point-when I asked my grandkids for money, just so I could gamble.

Q. Tell me about your recovery from this disorder.

1-800-GAMBLER linked me to Dr. David Frederick, who has been very helpful to me. He helped me write a brief autobiography to look at the origins of my gambling. He also introduced me to a computer program, the Slot Tutorial, which shows you the real odds of gambling. I also found it quite helpful to meet with GA, just to talk to other people who have gone through the same thing. I am doing much better now, and for the first time in years I'm out of debt.

Q. What message do you want to give other people struggling with this disorder?

I'd tell them to call to get help. There is no future in gambling. The longer you gamble, the more you'll lose, and one day you'll just be sick to realize how much you've spent gambling.

Professional Counselors: The Key to our Success



Jack Koehrsen is a nationally certified gambling counselor. Jack has over 250 hours of gambling specific training. Jack's quick wit and sense of humor, and his willingness to make an extra effort to help problem gamblers has made Jack a favorite of PGHNWV staff. He often agrees to meet with 1-800-Gambler callers after his normal work hours to accommodate their schedules. Feedback from callers after their face-to-face appointment with Jack shows that he is a favorite for them as well. We asked Jack a few questions about his practice with gamblers:

How long have you been doing counseling?

I've been in the counseling field for 34 years now, since graduating from WVU's Counseling and Guidance program.

Why did you decide to take the 35 hours of training from PGHNWV and become part of their network?

I received a letter from the Network, offering 35 hours of free training, including reimbursement for travel and

The Problem Gamblers Help Network recruits counselors statewide and selects the best in the field to become part of the gambling addiction program. Jack Koehrsen has been a contracted counselor for the program for four years, and he has treated over 100 problem gamblers. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a

lodging. I talked to the staff and they explained that they send the referrals, and unlike other states, they are able to pay for the gambler's treatment. I kept thinking there has to be a downside to signing up with the organization, but so far I haven't found it!

What is the most challenging thing about treating problem gamblers?

Overcoming the gambler's belief that he or she is just one bet away from a big win. By giving up that belief, they are giving up their hope of wealth.

Are many of your clients successful at stopping or reducing their gambling?

Yes, most do, if they are doing it because they want to, and have a good support system to help them through the rough spots. We should never underestimate the value of a good support system. That can make the difference between one more day of abstinence, and relapse with financial disaster.

Have you found any commonalities among the problem gamblers you have treated?

Each gambler is unique, but there do seem to be some similarities between many of them. I find certain thought distortions to be rather common. For example, most believe that if they play long enough they have to win. They don't seem to realize that the only certainty is that they will eventually lose and their gambling debt will grow.

Congratulations

to Steve Burton, Director of the Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia, on recently taking on the extra responsibility of being CEO of our parent company, First Choice Health Systems, Inc.



Alyssia Murdock (at left) and Christa Harshberger (at right), current 8th graders at New Martinsville School, received first place in the Spring 2008 Wetzel County Social Studies Fair in the Psychology Division, for their project on problem gambling. Harshberger is the daughter of Liz Harshberger, a network clinician in New Martinsville.

Happy 5th Year Anniversary to Gloria Kirk!



Gloria Kirk

surprise party to celebrate her five years with 1-800-GAMBLER.

Although help-line callers never actually speak to Gloria Kirk, she is working hard behind the scenes to make our program successful. Gloria is our office manager/bookkeeper/-accountant/secretary/data entry specialist, and just generally keeps the office running smoothly. PGHNWV staffers recently threw Gloria a



Michele Gordon

Michele's grasp of gambling addiction, and they often comment on her caring, warm demeanor. Michele will be focusing on ensuring that help-line callers receive quality continuum of care through the counseling process.

The Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV is pleased to announce that Michele Gordon is now a full time help-line clinical coordinator. Michele previously worked part time for the network. Michele has a Master of Social Work degree from West Virginia University and has worked in the social work profession for twenty-five years. Help-line callers are impressed with

HELP WANTED

Counselors, Social Workers, or Psychologists to become part of our referral network!*

The Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV is recruiting treatment professionals from the following areas:

Philippi	Madison	Wayne	Kingwood
Grantsville	Clay	Marlinton	Hinton
West Union	Glenville	Grafton	Williamson
Princeton	Union	Clay	Welch

Successful candidates must:

- Have an active professional license
- Take 35 hours of training in treating problem gamblers
- Work for an agency or own a private practice
- Maintain professional liability insurance

Network clinicians will receive:

- Free training from nationally recognized experts in gambling addiction
- Thirty-five free CEUs for attending the training
- Free clinical supervision to help you attain status as an Internationally Certified Gambling Counselor
- Free annual training on advanced concepts of treating problem gamblers
- Competitive pay for diagnosis and treatment of PGHN-WV referrals

If you are interested in becoming part of our highly skilled network of clinicians, please contact Sheila Moran at Sheila@1800GAMBLER.net or 1-888-696-2517.

* Please note that therapists will be utilized on a contractual as-needed basis, and will not be employees of the Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV.

1-800-GAMBLER Delivers Real Help

Help-line callers are mailed a survey to ask if the call was helpful. We have been doing this for over two years, and we've gotten almost all positive comments. Below is a sampling of recent comments from callers:

"I was seeking help for a fellow-professional. Sheila was extremely helpful, answered all of my questions and provided real good suggestions. She was very pleasant. We had been trying to get help from another organization for two months. The help line gave us more information in two minutes than the others."

"Nice job, I have not gambled since"

"I was thrilled to find this service. Danielle was courteous and very helpful. I had run out of ideas and places to turn for help for my husband. Thank you so much"

"I love the billboards. I've read them over the years and never imagined I'd ever need to call- the number is easy to remember. Thanks for being there; otherwise I wouldn't have known where to turn"

"I didn't realize the extent of help I would have gotten by calling this number. If I knew all the help you all gave I would have called a long time ago. I know it's going to be the hardest thing I've ever done but the compassion that Jane showed me has put me on the right track. I will do the best I can. Thank you Jane, you don't know what you've done for me but I greatly appreciate you"

Intensive Outpatient Therapy

Intensive outpatient therapy is a program geared towards those who have tried unsuccessfully to stop gambling. The Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV is currently conducting intensive outpatient therapy programs in Beckley and Weirton. Sessions are planned for early 2009 in Teays Valley and Parkersburg. The program is six weeks long, and is generally six hours per week. This may sound like a big commitment of time, but most people find that they were spending at least that much time gambling. The program is free, and may even save participants THOUSANDS of dollars in money not spent gambling.

There is still time to enroll in the Teays Valley or Parkersburg program. We have a limited amount of space for this free program, so if you are interested please call right away. We can be reached toll free at 1-888-696-2517, or you can e-mail for more details at Sheila@1800Gambler.net.

Your Lucky Number

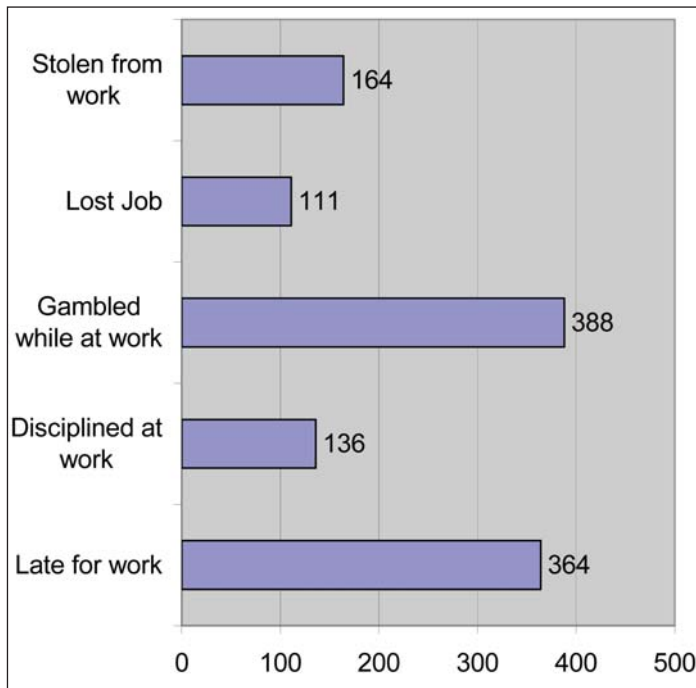
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We help problem gamblers. Free. Confidential. Local.

Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia • Administered by WV-DHHR.
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About four years ago we noticed increasing comments on the help-line about problems at work brought on by gambling, so we started asking callers who show up for a face-to-face consultation about how gambling had effected them at work, and this is what they told us:



*Based on face to face interviews with over 1500 problem gamblers

719

The number of WV help-line callers who have filed bankruptcy, or who are seriously contemplating doing so.

