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Gamblers' Kids Left in Hot Cars
Summer Poses Another Danger Warns WV Helpline

This Spring, a California couple left their newborn infant alone in the car while they gambled. Two weeks ago, a Connecticut couple left their two children in the car while they gambled at Foxwoods Casino....a Philadelphia man left his toddler alone in the car so he could play slots...all were arrested; some lost custody.

These children survived, but others have died when left in hot cars. Steve Burton, director of the Problem Gambler's Help Network of West Virginia, says that people with a gambling addiction are of special concern when it comes to this sad type of event.

"A gambler's obsession with the game may lead to actions they would not normally do," explains Burton. "About a third of problem gamblers who have called the Help Network of West Virginia have small children at home, and many admit to leaving their kids alone, either in a car or at home, to gamble."

"Spending more time gambling than planned is a common symptom of gambling addiction," continues Burton. "Helpline callers often tell us that they only meant to play for a few minutes, but then they lost their money and felt they had to stay longer to try to get their initial investment back. Alternatively, they may "hit" for some money, and feel compelled to continue playing those credits, hoping for a bigger win."

Problem Gambler's Help Network of West Virginia counselors work with gamblers to make sure that if they relapse, they have a plan for a safe place for their children to go. Anyone with a gambling problem, or who has a loved one with an addiction, should call 1-800-GAMBLER for help. "We have over 100 counselors who can provide free help to problem gamblers and their families," concludes Burton, "and they are available throughout the state."

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