



# Kentucky Council on Problem Gambling

**When it's no longer a game . . . there is help!**

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**HELPLINE**  
1-800-GAMBLER

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*Dear Reader:*

As I write this in Summer 2003, Kentucky is faced with a public-health issue that many fail to recognize. As president of the Kentucky Council on Problem Gambling (KYCPG), I know the devastation that happens when gambling becomes more than a pastime or occasional entertainment. When a person craves gambling above all else, when a person gambles with dollars that should pay for basic necessities, when a person lies and steals to get money to gamble, it is an addiction. The American Psychiatric Association defined it as a pathological disorder in 1980.

Compulsive or pathological gambling affects at least 25,000 Kentuckians. At least twice that number are problem gamblers who have some of the behaviors but still have some control over their gambling. Compulsive and problem gamblers are greater in number than Kentucky's third largest city, Owensboro.

Studies across the United States and in Canada, Great Britain and Australia, document the public-health concern. Compulsive gamblers cause harm to themselves and others. They have a high suicide rate. They abuse their spouse and children at high rates. They enter bankruptcy in large numbers. They use illegal acts to finance their gambling. The damage they cause touches many lives. A Spring 2001 study printed in Murray State University's *Journal of Business and Public Affairs* reported that each compulsive gambler costs society \$13,585 each year. That means annual social costs in Kentucky from its compulsive gamblers are more than \$300 million.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be that way. Through self help (Gamblers Anonymous) or counseling, compulsive gamblers can learn to control their addiction. KYCPG promotes programs that can help.

- 1-800-GAMBLER is a 24-hour, 7-day helpline. The toll-free call is answered in confidence by trained staff at the River Valley Behavioral Health Crisis Line in Owensboro. They talk callers through an incident, provide a referral, or send information.
- The number of Gamblers Anonymous meetings open to Kentucky residents has more than doubled, from 11 to 23, in the last four years, and they geographically cover the state.
- The number of counselors certified to serve compulsive gamblers and their families, friends, coworkers or employers has increased from one to eight in the last four years.

As you read this booklet, you will learn about this devastating addiction. You will learn the warning signs and realize there can be a better life. If you or someone you know needs help, please call 1-800-GAMBLER right now. Let KYCPG know if you need information or your group wants a presentation on the subject.

Sincerely,

*Caleb Cooley*

Caleb Cooley  
KYCPG President