

First Responsible Gaming Education Week Set for August

A coalition of individuals and organizations committed to raising awareness of problem and compulsive gambling in Kentucky is planning the state's first Responsible Gaming Education Week, which will be held Aug. 5-9, 2002. Representatives from the Kentucky Lottery, Churchill Downs, Caesars Indiana, Argosy Casino and Hotel, the state Division of Substance Abuse, State Rep. Jack Coleman, certified gambling counselors Steven Alexander and Kennon Stone, and KYCPG President Caleb Cooley, Board Member Gayle DiCesare and Executive Director Mike Stone held an initial meeting at the Kentucky Lottery headquarters in Louisville on Feb. 15.

A second meeting on April 19 will finalize plans after receiving reports from the Marketing, Printed Material, Speakers, Logistics and Event Subcommittees. Among the items discussed were coordinated awareness events across the state, gaming industry employee awareness programs, and public service announcements and advertising. The Committee hopes to announce the schedule of activities in late spring. The Committee is targeting broad participation in all events, and will encourage media coverage to generate further awareness of problem gambling.

KYCPG Relies on Memberships to Maintain, Develop Activities

2002 KYCPG membership renewal statements will be mailed in May. KYCPG receives funding solely from membership dues, donations, grants, and conference sponsorships and registration fees. The Council receives no direct public funding. It is grateful for all members and others who support its activities through donations and conference attendance.

In addition to renewal statements, other individuals and businesses that have participated in KYCPG activities over the past year will be encouraged to become members. When you receive the request, please consider joining. Your dues will help KYCPG:

- Publish the newsletter, *Inside the Numbers*,
- Post 200 billboard awareness messages each year,
- Present annual and fall conferences and other training,
- Print awareness brochures and booklets, which are distributed at no cost,
- Pursue legislation to establish compulsive gambling awareness and assistance programs, and
- Promote and maintain the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline, a toll-free, confidential, 24/7 referral and information service.

Annual Conference Recap

More than 60 individuals attended the Sixth Annual Educational and Awareness Conference — *Another Step toward knowledge and help* — held in Lexington Feb. 21-22. The Thursday

program focused on adolescent and youth gambling. The keynote speaker was Dr. Ken Winters, University of Minnesota, who many consider the leading expert on the subject in the U.S. He was followed by a panel of industry representatives — Rick Redman, Kentucky Lottery; Fred McCarter, Argosy Casino and Hotel; Trish Candler, Churchill Downs, Inc.; and Leah Cooper, state Department of Charitable Gaming — who discussed efforts to prevent underage gambling at legal venues.

The highlight was a five-hour presentation on Friday by Dr. Robert Ladouceur, University of Laval, an expert on applying cognitive behavioral therapy to compulsive gambling treatment and an often-published researcher on the subject. The following are some of his observations and suggestions.

- When gambling, 80 percent of perceptions are erroneous, and 95 percent of erroneous conclusions are based on trying to link independent events. Gambling is the only human experience in which the individual should not base his judgment on past events.
- The main idea is gambling is a leisure activity. As any other activity, you must pay for it. You shouldn't spend or gamble what you can't afford to lose. Prevention programs must have:
 1. Content based on knowledge of gambling,
 2. Be specific and relevant to gambling activity,
 3. Include erroneous perception of illusions of control, and
 4. Be empirically evaluated.
- It cannot be forgotten that gambling is an individual decision. Informed consent is based on correct information, not on an intrusive attitude.

Legislature Takes No Action on Major Gambling Proposals

Gambling was a big topic at the 2002 Kentucky General Assembly session that ended on April 15, but only a bill proposed by veteran organizations that operate charitable gaming passed. It increased an operational fee, with the added funds to be used to support veteran retirement homes. Otherwise, there was a lot of debate and activity, but little action. The bills died in committee, none reaching the legislative floor for a vote.

HB 203, supported by KYCPG, would carve out portions of the existing state revenues from legal gambling activities to create a Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Fund. It would pay for educational, awareness and treatment programs phased in over six years. Introduced by Rep. Jack Coleman, it was referred to the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee. In Committee, the proposed funding was considered "new money" and was rejected due to the state's fiscal condition.

HB 768, supported by Kentucky's horse racing industry, would permit slot machines operated by the state's existing eight race tracks. It was opposed by Senate leadership. It did include funds for a problem gambling program, although KYCPG argued that the funds were insufficient to deal with the proposed expansion.

HB 743, proposed by charitable gaming, contained both modernization and expansion of bingos and pull tabs. KYCPG pointed out in testimony that it did not address problem gambling.

Cost of Doing Business

(Editor's Note: *This is Part 3 of a paper authored by KYCCG Professional Adviser Curtis L. Barrett, Ph.D., ABPP, CCGC. As serialized in this space, Dr. Barrett reviews the results of studies that capture the "cost of doing business" related to the actions of compulsive gamblers.*)

Despite the good intentions and actions by many across Kentucky, the practicing clinician in this state nevertheless faces a flood of clients and a paucity of resources. Using the most conservative figures available, it is estimated that Kentucky has more than 30,000 problem gamblers **right now**. Undoubtedly, more problem gamblers will surface if gambling expands in Kentucky. Some of the proposed alternative forms of gambling are thought to be more addictive than others. At this time, only six clinicians in Kentucky are formally credentialed in problem gambling. There are no residential programs in the state that offer treatment for problem gambling as usually occurs. That is, the client is broke. After all, desperation visits gamblers when they no longer have the means for staying in "action," namely, money. In my practice, I have observed problem gamblers who withheld money from other family needs, such as medical care, in order to have money for gambling. I have never heard a gambler say, "Well, I am tapped out, but thank goodness I saved back enough money to cover my treatment if I needed it." No way.

Finally, it is the case that the Commonwealth's training programs in medicine, mental health, and addiction provide little that is specific to gambling disorders. The common view is that

problem gambling "is just another addiction" and treatment techniques for alcoholism or drug addiction should suffice. This, unfortunately, reflects simple ignorance and, possibly, plain arrogance.

The clinical and public-policy lessons that follow from the above are fairly simple.

- First, gambling is here already, and it probably will be here for the foreseeable future.
- Second, there is a **present** "cost" to utilizing gambling revenues for public necessities.
- Third, "cost" now far exceeds resources, and, if gambling expands, we may expect those costs to increase.

Any expansion of gambling in Kentucky, if done responsibly, will include significant funds to pay the "cost of doing (gambling) business."

Upcoming Events

- June 13-15, National Conference on Problem Gambling, Dallas (registration available on line at www.ncpgambling.org).
- July 21-26, Kentucky School on Alcohol and Other Drug Studies, Northern Kentucky University (Compulsive Gambling Workshop on July 24).
- August 5-9, Responsible Gaming Education Week.

Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

The following is a list of the current G.A. (Gamblers Anonymous) meetings in or serving Kentucky. For exact times, locations and a phone number for contact person, **please call 1-800-GAMBLER**.

Monday

- Southeast Christian Church, 7 p.m., Louisville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting at 6 p.m.)
- United Way Building, 7 p.m., Bowling Green
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, 8 p.m., Huntington, WV
- Steppingstone Counseling, 7 p.m., Evansville, IN

Tuesday

- CARE Center, 9 p.m., Louisville

- First Presbyterian Church, 6:30 p.m., Lexington

- First Baptist Church, 6:30 p.m., Pikeville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

- Florence Christian Church, 8 p.m., Florence

Wednesday

- Pigeon Roost 12-step Club, 7:30 p.m., Louisville

- St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 6:30 p.m., Lexington

Thursday

- Southland Christian Church, 6:30 p.m., Lexington

- Caritas Hospital B Cafeteria, 7:30 p.m., Louisville

- St. Mary's Church, 6 p.m., Evansville, IN (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

- Lourdes Hospital Classroom #4, 7 p.m., Paducah

Friday

- Generations Center (downtown), 6:30 p.m., Hazard

- Southeast Church of Christ, 7:30 p.m., Louisville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

Saturday

- Pigeon Roost 12-step Club, 8:30 a.m., Louisville

- Token Club III, 6 p.m., Louisville

Sunday

- Iroquois Pizza (2nd&4th), 1 p.m., Louisville (Open meeting, family welcome)

- KET Building, 4:30 p.m., Lexington (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

- Methodist Temple, 5 p.m. Evansville, IN (Also separate Gam-Anon meet.)

KYCPG Resources

KYCPG provides resources to further awareness about problem and compulsive gambling. At present, all items are free on request. Contact Executive Director Mike Stone (502/223-1823 or e-mail kmstone@mis.net) to order.

* *It's A Great Game* is a booklet currently under revision that generally reviews compulsive gambling.

* *When It's More Than A Game* is a brochure that promotes awareness and the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline.

* *Financial Strategies for the Loved Ones of Problem Gamblers* is a booklet offering insights on money issues.

* *Lesson Plans on Gambling Behavior* is a youth awareness curriculum suitable for schools or youth groups.