

## Emerging Trends in Gambling/Gaming

### National Council on Problem Gambling Prevention Committee

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. NCPG was founded in 1972 and is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that is neutral on legalized gambling.

While most people who choose to gamble do so without harm, a significant portion of the population (about 2 million Americans) have gambling problems. At a time when many states are in financial distress, expansion of gambling opportunities is often seen as a win/win, increasing state revenues and providing new entertainment options to its citizens. It is not surprising that problem gambling service professionals sometimes can feel frustrated when they see the expansion of gambling opportunities; more casino and lottery games. There is a recognized correlation between gambling opportunity and accessibility and the development of at risk gambling behavior or gambling addiction.

It is therefore imperative that prevention specialists be aware of emerging trends in gambling and call attention to the risks inherent therein. While we maintain a neutral position on gambling expansion it is incumbent on us to share and recommend protections that can minimize the risk of harm from these new gambling opportunities, and to provide protection for populations vulnerable to the development of a gambling problem. The "Emerging Trends" Task group of the Prevention Committee of the National Council on Problem Gambling has prepared this brief report to familiarize professionals with the new forms of gambling that are seen to be developing in this country. It is our intention to then select several of these emerging trends and explore in more detail the risks for gambling addiction created therein and possible approaches to reducing potential harm.

**Fantasy Sports**, the selection of fantasy teams based upon real sports players, has become more and more prevalent in society with "daily fantasy

sports” (DFS) seeing a spiked interest. Fantasy sports portrays itself as a game of skill but those of us who work in the gambling field recognize that there is the necessary element of luck and chance involved (that match what most knowledge people would describe as gambling) that it meets our gambling test The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) has issued a set of Consumer Protection Guidelines) for daily fantasy sports with goals of protecting minors, allowing for informed decision making, requiring truthful advertising, seeking transparency and providing for financial and customer protections.

**Esports**, a catch all phrase for competitive video gaming, has recently jumped into the spotlight of new gambling activities. E Sports are usually one of three types: betting on professional gaming teams at large competitions, betting “skins” on games that can be purchased or sold for real money and placing a buy-in on a game that is played by the betters. Are Esports “real” sports? That is debatable. Are Esports gambling? It depends, just like “regular sports” on whether someone is watching/competing or betting money on it. But with an estimated 4.17 million players in the US and total gambling of \$715 million in 2016 and anticipated \$12 billion dollars by 2020 this is clearly an area of concern for professionals who work with the gambling disordered or at risk gamblers.

The convergence of **social gaming and gambling** is another emerging trend. There is ongoing research examining whether playing blackjack or other casino games for fun can lead to playing the same games for money. It is easy to imagine how success playing for fun can lead to efforts to translate that “skill” into a money making activity. The lack of minimum age for social gaming can lead to a new generation of youth developing an interest in gambling. Again there may be a need to actively voice concerns and warnings about the inherent risks of this activity and to try to insure safeguards are put in place as youth may be a distinctly vulnerable population.

**Skill- based gambling** is slowly emerging into the gambling field. It has been recognized that the millennials are not excited or attracted by traditional slot machines. Casinos have thus sought to expand interest of this group by developing skill based games. Millennials are attracted to testing their skills and

communicating about it with others via social media. The use of well- known television shows or popular gaming titles can capture the imagination and perhaps bring a new audience to the casinos. For example most New Jersey casinos have installed Danger Arena (a first person shooter game) and Pharaoh's Secret Temple ( a puzzle game similar to Candy Crush).

There appears to be a major push in this country for expansion of **sports gambling**. Currently under federal law (Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, PASPA) sports gambling is only available in some form in four states. The American Gaming Association has spearheaded a drive to legislatively change the ban on sports gambling and the major sports leagues have shown an increasing desire to accept and embrace sports gambling. There is presently a legal case brought by New Jersey which is seeking Supreme Court certification. NCPG has recently come out with a resolution about sports gambling, calling for regulators, leagues and the media to play an active role in recognizing the potential impact on gambling addiction and taking necessary steps to provide additional treatment and prevention funding, develop education programs for athletes and publish a Gambling Helpline number wherever odds on sporting events are provided or advertised.

**Internet gambling** is presently available in three states (Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware) and there is pending legislation in numerous other states. The convenience and availability of the Internet certainly creates a risk of gambling disorders, many of the qualities we associate with addictive gambling are reflected in Internet Gambling. Again the NCPG has come out with standards recommended to minimize gambling addiction.

Professional working in the prevention or treatment of gambling disorders field need to also be advocates for their clients. We need to clearly articulate what steps are appropriate to help mitigate gambling addiction, as well as appropriate recommendations for regulators, the gambling industry and individuals. Gambling is a public health issue and it is imperative that awareness and responsibilities be set forth among the various institutions that foster gambling. Our task group hopes to clarify and provide suggestions and

innovations designed to aid professionals in the gambling field, as well as the individuals who are at risk for developing problems with gambling.