

The Council Connection

Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ
800-GAMBLER[®]

August 2023

A Message from the Executive Director

The CCGNJ to Follow 40th Anniversary Gala with Annual Conference on Disordered Gambling



A full house joined the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) on June 9 at the New Jersey Law Center for a Gala celebrating a true landmark: our 40th Anniversary. The evening was certainly one to remember, and I want to thank everyone who helped make it so. The Gala commemorated our four decades of raising awareness of helping problem gamblers and their families, while also honoring the remarkable Arnie Wexler, a former Council Executive Director and a seminal figure in addressing gambling addiction. We also recognized Alice Ostapiuk, whose steadfast dedication throughout her 30 years of employment at the Council has made her indispensable to all fortunate enough to have her as a colleague (to

view a video and photos from the Gala, go to [CCGNJ's 40th Anniversary Gala](#).

The Gala brought individuals and families in recovery from problem gambling, treatment facility representatives and gambling industry employees, among others. Craig Carton, host of the radio program and podcast “Hello, My Name is Craig, delivered the keynote. He and Arnie represented two generations of gambling addiction recovery, and both ground their recovery in extending a hand to anyone in need of help.

With the celebration of our history behind us, we anticipate our annual Statewide Conference on Disordered Gambling, which looks to the future. The conference will take place September 28 under the banner of “Why Our Services are Needed Now More than Ever.” This theme arises from an upswell of problem gambling in recent years largely due to the legalization of online gambling and sports betting. Evidence of the gambling spike is found in the 800-GAMBLER Helpline statistics, which reflect a 28 percent increase in intake calls between 2022 and 2023.

The conference program will include sessions covering scientific advances, gambling issues affecting minority populations, and the excess of gambling advertising. The conference keynote will be delivered by Dr. Kenneth Martz, who will delve into neuroscience and rewiring the brain with a presentation titled “*The Power of Plasticity: Paving New Neural Pathways for Recovery.*” The first plenary session will examine gambling issues facing the LGBTQ and Latino communities, followed by a consideration of how to limit gambling advertising in an age of relaxed restrictions on commercial free

speech. The conference will conclude with a dialogue on what is needed from industry operators to foster a robust responsible gambling environment and the role of regulators in securing such an environment.

We hope you will join us for what is sure to be an outstanding day of education, networking and collegiality. Individuals and organizations will have opportunities to exhibit at the conference and sponsor the council's mission. Please visit the following link to register for the conference and view all related information: [CCGNJ Conference](#)

Felicia Grondin, MPA
Executive Director

Council Connection Interview with Jamie McKelvey, State's First Responsible Gaming Coordinator

The Council Connection conducted the following interview with Jamie McKelvey (**pictured**), recently appointed the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement's (DGE) first Responsible Gaming Coordinator. Ms. McKelvey is responsible for the development, oversight, and implementation of DGE's existing responsible gaming programs as well as future initiatives. She is engaged with DGE licensees to ensure their ongoing commitment to the state's responsible gaming goals, and she works with other state, national, and international government agencies engaged in research or the operation of programs designed to prevent and treat problem gaming behavior. Ms. McKelvey also collaborates with problem-gambling organizations to identify best practices for the prevention, education, awareness and outreach to those at risk. She has been a Deputy Attorney General for over four years, prior to which she worked for the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office and the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice.



What does it mean for the Attorney General to have created the Responsible Gaming Coordinator position? Is New Jersey the first state to have such a dedicated RG position?

The creation of this position by Attorney General Platkin demonstrates New Jersey's commitment to prioritizing responsible gambling practices and player protection within the State. The RG Coordinator serves as a key figure responsible for overseeing and coordinating responsible gaming initiatives and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations.

Several states, including New Jersey, have recognized the importance of responsible gaming and have taken steps to address and prioritize it.

How does your background contribute to your new role?

My time spent with Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) and experience prior to joining the Division enable me to effectively address the challenges associated with responsible gaming. As a Deputy Attorney General with DGE, I have gained an understanding of the regulations and operational practices of the gaming industry. When I first joined the NJ Attorney General's Office, I was assigned to the Prosecutors Supervision and Training Bureau within the Division of Criminal Justice ("DCJ"). While with DCJ, I worked with community groups and different state agencies to develop law enforcement training programs related to mental illness both with the Community-Law Enforcement Affirmative Relations ("CLEAR") Institute and the DCJ Training Academy. While working for DCJ, I saw the benefits of comprehensive and consistent training and messaging across different agencies. Prior to joining DCJ, I worked as an assistant prosecutor at the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office. There, I gained skills in investigation and enforcement and have seen

first-hand the impact of addiction. These skills are utilized in my new role to conduct investigations related to responsible gaming violations, such as fraudulent activities or non-compliance with player protection measures. Having seen just how pervasive and devastating addiction can be, and how difficult it is for people to seek help, I know we need a comprehensive approach to responsible gaming from both a regulatory and player support standpoint. It is a wide-ranging problem that requires a multidimensional approach with a collaboration between the public sector, private industry, and advocacy groups.

Since this is a newly created position, what issues do you think are important to address?

While my position may be new, the Division and the Attorney General's Office have been working closely with the industry and advocacy groups since 2011 when the Division was tasked statutorily with the oversight of responsible gaming and problem gaming, as well as all other gaming regulatory areas. For decades prior to 2011, the Division had been actively involved in, committed to, and served an important role in the areas of responsible gaming and problem gaming. Since the commencement of Internet gaming in 2013 and then sports wagering in 2018, the Division also has had an ongoing relationship related to those areas with Rutgers University to study, analyze and address responsible gaming and problem gaming matters. Notably, the Division earlier this year announced a cutting-edge initiative whereby online wagering companies will analyze electronically maintained player data to determine whether a patron is showing signs of problem gambling behavior. The technology enables responsible gaming personnel to proactively reach out to these at-risk players to offer information and assistance. This program is the first of its kind in the country to be implemented.

Going forward, what is your vision for the State's RG efforts? What aspect of this position do you find most appealing?

I want to carry through on AG Platkin's focus on responsible gaming, and build from New Jersey's existing place as national leader in the area. I hope the State's RG initiatives create an environment where individuals can enjoy gambling entertainment responsibly, with adequate protections in place. This includes minimizing the potential harm associated with problem gambling and ensuring that players have knowledge of and access to the necessary support and resources.

One aspect of this position that I find particularly appealing is the opportunity to collaborate with various stakeholders, including industry operators, treatment providers, advocacy groups, and the public. By working together, we can develop innovative strategies, implement evidence-based practices, and continuously improve the responsible gaming framework in the State.

The gambling environment is constantly expanding and evolving. In view of this, what are the greatest challenges, both near-term and long-term?

The biggest challenge is the presence of unregulated offshore gaming websites that target players from the United States, and which provide no consumer protections, provide no tax revenue, and which may be associated with criminal activity, money laundering, and fraud. This is not a challenge that New Jersey is able to address on its own. New Jersey, along with several other states, has recently requested that the Department of Justice pursue enforcement of US laws against illegal offshore gaming sites.

With the growth of online casinos and sports books as well as emerging technologies, it is essential to stay abreast of new platforms, payment methods, and responsible gaming tools. No longer do players need to leave their homes to gamble. Since regulated internet gaming was launched in New Jersey in 2013, players located within the State have been able to play online casino games in their own homes. As technology continues to progress, we have seen internet gaming go from being played on laptop computers to, increasingly, apps on your phone that can be played at anytime, anywhere. This increased ease of engaging in internet gaming and sports wagering services can also increase the risk of problem gaming and addiction. Finding a balance between the need for consumer convenience and responsible gaming measures continues to be an ongoing challenge.

The Division has been working with Rutgers University to identify, understand, and

address the specific needs of different demographic groups, such as younger players and vulnerable populations. Understanding the needs of different segments of the population is crucial to implementing tailored educational campaigns and support services to mitigate potential harms. By addressing these needs early, we can hopefully provide an intervention before an individual's gaming activity becomes a problem.

What is your view of self-regulation by gambling operators?

Self-regulation is a valuable component of responsible gambling efforts. It allows operators to proactively implement policies and practices that promote player protection and responsible gambling, with many operators going beyond what is strictly required by our regulations and best practices. An effective approach to responsible gaming involves a combination of self-regulation, industry collaboration, and governmental regulations to create a comprehensive responsible gambling framework.

Can you discuss technology's expanded role in identifying potential problem gamblers, at brick-and-mortar casinos and online gambling sites? What steps will be taken to assist someone who may show signs of a gambling problem?

As technology creates more opportunities to gamble, the Division recognizes that it is also an essential tool to fight addiction by identifying potential problem gamblers, thereby making it easier and more effective to help those in need. The Division's RG Best Practices require providers to leverage technology to aid in identifying potential problem gamblers and implement automatic triggers for intervention. Player tracking systems and data analytics can help monitor gambling behavior patterns, detect signs of potential gambling-related harm, and identify individuals who may require intervention. This targeted approach removes the onus of reaching out for help from at-risk players, who may not recognize the warning signs of problem gambling. Moreover, without the aid of technology, it would be nearly impossible for operators to manually monitor the gaming activity of every patron.

How do you feel public awareness of RG practices and principles can best be achieved?

Achieving public awareness of RG practices and principles requires a multi-faceted approach, including targeted public awareness campaigns to educate the general public about responsible gambling, potential risks, and available resources for help; partnering with community organizations, schools, and universities to integrate responsible gambling education into existing programs, curricula, and community events; and encouraging operators to actively promote responsible gambling messages through their platforms, websites, and marketing materials, thereby reaching a wide audience of players. We're looking forward to sharing more of the AG's responsible gaming focus in public ways in the near future.

Enforcement Questions:

How does the DGE plan to enforce new regulations related to advertising limits and the size of the 800-GAMBLER logo?

While we can't speculate on hypothetical enforcement actions, the Division takes these best practices seriously, and through a combination of monitoring and collaboration with the industry and advocacy groups, expects compliance with them. We will continue to develop clear guidelines and regulations regarding advertising limits, ensuring operators have a clear understanding of what is permissible and what is not.

The Division will also continue to monitor advertising practices of gaming operators to ensure compliance with our Best Practices and Regulations and will conduct audits and inspections to assess compliance and take appropriate actions in cases of non-compliance. Our current regulations require that all internet and mobile advertisements and promotions, including those conducted by affiliates, be filed with the Division prior to use. Collaboration with stakeholders, industry associations, and operators remains an essential component to ensure the guidelines and best practices for advertising are adhered to.

How does the DGE intend to enforce limiting advertising in locations where it would entice those under 21 years of age to play?

The DGE is committed to reviewing this important issue and released guidance about advertising standards earlier this year. While we aren't in a position to provide specifics on actions now, we will have something to announce in the near future.

DGE Eases Access to Self-Exclusion with New Toll-free Number, Video Conferencing

Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin (**pictured**) and Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) Director David Rebeck recently unveiled two new tools to assist problem gamblers: a dedicated hotline and a virtual option to self-exclude from gaming activities. These new methods of gambling self-exclusion will assist both the growing number of problem gamblers who wager online and those who gamble at casinos, the racetrack or play the lottery.



Gamblers seeking to exclude themselves from wagering in New Jersey can now contact DGE via a new, dedicated, toll-free phone number, 1-833-788-4DGE, to learn about and initiate the self-exclusion process. Patrons can utilize the helpline to schedule an in-person appointment or to take advantage of the new video conference option with DGE responsible gaming personnel.

Through traditional in-person or newly available virtual meetings, patrons can choose to exclude themselves from online gambling or from both online and in-person gambling. The new video-conference option reduces barriers for patrons to address their problem gambling by completing the process without having to leave their homes.

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey's Executive Director Felicia Grondin welcomed the announcement of promoting self-exclusion and responsible gambling with the launch of DGE's phone number and video conferencing. Ms. Grondin said that easing the way to self-exclusion for problem gamblers is an important step in view of online access to gambling. The 800-GAMBLER Helpline has seen an upswell in problem gambling calls in recent years, notably since the advent of legalized sports betting in the state,

Patrons can also exclude themselves from Internet gaming through an online application and via the DGE website, after identity verification has been completed. An in-person meeting is required for self-exclusion from brick-and-mortar casino gambling.

"New Jersey has always been a national leader in gaming, as the first to allow casino gambling outside Nevada and the first to launch Internet gaming. And we are now focusing on making our pioneering state the standard in responsible gaming practices," said Attorney General Platkin. "The efforts announced today underscore our commitment to helping problem gamblers by expanding the entry points for self-exclusion and other methods to receive assistance."

"We hope the new tools being unveiled today will help to further reduce the risk of problem gambling," said David Rebeck, Division of Gaming Enforcement Director. "By promoting responsible gaming practices, we can help keep gaming an enjoyable and entertaining activity for all."

DGE is also preparing to launch an updated Responsible Gaming landing page on its website that will serve as a central location containing a variety of responsible gaming information, including:

- Self-exclusion information;

- Annual reports by Rutgers University which examine the impact of Internet gaming and sports wagering and analyze patterns of play across all players and bets during the year;
- DGE's responsible gaming best practices for operators; and
- DGE's responsible gaming regulations.

The announcements about the phone number and website follow the appointment of DGE's first Responsible Gaming Coordinator, Deputy Attorney General Jamie McKelvey (see interview with Ms. McKelvey in this issue) in early May.

To access the DGE's Self-Exclusion webpage, go to: [DGE Self-Exclusion](#)

Online Gambling in New Jersey Extended until 2028



Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation (S3075) on June 30 to extend online gambling in New Jersey for five years, half the extension term lawmakers initially proposed, which would have been until 2033. The measure went through several iterations that included an extension of just two years before lawmakers settled on the compromise of extending internet betting until 2028. It never seemed in question that online betting, with its infusion of revenue to state coffers, would receive approval to continue beyond its fall deadline.

Online casino gambling was legalized in 2013 and at the time was authorized for a ten-year period, which was due to expire in November. Legislators noted that since its legalization, online gambling has contributed to economic growth, job creation, and significant tax revenue, which since 2014 has spiked by 1676 percent.

Advocates concerned about gambling's growing presence in the state note that too little attention has been paid to the downside of online betting, which includes the lion's share (over 90 percent) of sports betting. Between 2014, the first full year of online betting in the state, and 2022, calls to the 800-GAMBLER Helpline spiked by 161 percent.

CCGNJ submitted testimony at a June 20 hearing on the original version of S3075. The Council acknowledged the fiscal benefits gambling revenue affords the state but urged Legislators to consider the social costs of internet betting. The testimony noted the ease of access to gambling using one's phone or computer. A study commissioned by the Council found betting apps' ease of access to be a significant influence on a person's inclination to gamble.

It should be noted that the Legislature has taken some steps to address the gambling culture within the state. These measures include a resolution to reduce excessive gambling advertising (AR168) and a bill that would require New Jersey public schools to include education about gambling risks in the implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. The CCGNJ supported these and other proposals to curtail the expansion of gambling and educate the public about the risks of problem gambling.

CCGNJ's Cognitive Perspective Restructuring Program Lauded as First Two Classes Complete Course



(CCGNJ) launched an evidence-based program for at-risk youth this spring that has made a very promising start. Two classes comprising 73 students from two urban school districts completed the CCGNJ's Cognitive Perspective Restructuring (CPR) Program, which includes education about gambling risks. Mounting concern about youth gambling recently prompted New Jersey legislators to take up a proposal that would require gambling prevention classes in all public schools.

Youth gambling has been increasing largely through online betting platforms. The CCGNJ recently assessed the extent of online youth gambling through a project conducted with Seton Hall University's Marketing and Research Center. This study surveyed youth and young adults between the ages of 16 and 25 and found nearly eight in ten (79 percent) of those who gamble began their betting before they reached the online gambling legal age of 21. Adolescents develop problem gambling at a higher rate than adults: between 6-8 percent in youth compared to 1-2 percent in adults. The Executive Summary of the youth gambling study is available at: [Seton-Hall-2023-Executive-Summary](#)

In response to the upswell of youth betting, the New Jersey Legislature introduced a bill (A-5308) which would require education about gambling risks for all public school students. Under the proposal, gambling would be added to the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health & Physical Education.

The CCGNJ CPR program's first cohort completed the course, offered at no cost to schools, in mid-June. Forty-three West Orange High School students finished the program, while Sprout University School of the Arts in Trenton graduated a class of 30 **(pictured with CCGNJ Prevention and Treatment Administrator Luis Del Orbe, seated at far left)**. Other schools throughout the state expressed interest in having the CCGNJ bring the CPR program to their students. A train-the-trainer program is currently being developed which will expand the program's reach. Over the summer, CPR, delivered in ten 90-minute sessions, is being presented at the Boys and Girls Club of Trenton and Lawrence Township.

Sprout University Headmaster Danielle Miller-Winrow lauded the CPR Program for the benefits it delivered to students at the school: "The Council on Compulsive Gambling (of New Jersey's) Program has been a standard of excellence and has had a significant impact on the lives of my students by supplying them with educational resources and comprehensive preventative measures ... I consider the CPR Program an invaluable resource because of its commitment to quality, originality, and involvement within the community."

Parents were likewise impressed. Sakiyyah Darden, whose daughter, Aniiya, graduated from CPR at Sprout University, said, "The program was very therapeutic for my child. She found the classes to be a safe space to explore her emotions, express herself and learn important life lessons. She learned a great deal about accountability and has a better understanding that her actions can have real consequences."

Recent CPR graduate Aniiya appreciated how the program will help her meet challenges and embrace opportunities: "I learned mindfulness techniques to help with the various situations that may happen in my life."

CPR instills confidence in youth and has benefits that extend beyond the classroom. It is designed to help parents, educators and community stakeholders cultivate self-awareness in adolescents and identify risk factors that can contribute to youth falling into addictive or other self-destructive behaviors, including gambling. CPR prioritizes the essential role of

parents/guardians and requires their involvement for a child's admission to the program and builds self-regulation which is essential to teenagers. The program also helps youth identify and pursue their passion, and guides them in developing a life plan and goal setting. To learn more about the CPR Program, please contact Luis Del Orbe, CCGNJ Prevention and Treatment Administrator, at 973-336-7075 or luis@800gambler.org.

Book a Presentation or Responsible Gambling Training Session

Would you like for the CCGNJ to visit your facility or group to discuss gambling and related disorders? Are you an industry leader who would like your employees to receive Responsible Gambling Training? Presentations and trainings can be provided in person or via Zoom. Please contact Luis Del Orbe, Prevention & Treatment Administrator, at 609-588-5515 (ext 110) or luis@800gambler.org to schedule a date.



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