

# The Council Connection

Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ  
**800-GAMBLER®**

*January 2024*

## *A Message from the Executive Director*

### **Reflections on 2023's Many Successes Steel CCGNJ as We Enter the New Year**

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) opens the new year propelled by a banner 2023. Last year was noteworthy for significant gains made in a host of areas, for the launch of a new prevention program for youth, and for marking our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a milestone celebrated with a gala honoring Arnie Wexler's passionate and enduring advocacy on behalf of problem gamblers and their families. More broadly, gambling issues such as excessive marketing and youth exposure to betting received heightened attention from lawmakers, the media and the general public. To these and related matters the Council lent a pivotal, authoritative voice.

CCGNJ recognizes and has responded to the fact that gambling's tremendous growth is a double-edged sword: it generates large sums of revenue for the state, but it also looms ever larger to create a greater threat of gambling problems. Gambling's expansion in the state stems largely from the legalization of online casino and sports betting apps. The infusion of revenue from these new gambling sources could dissuade lawmakers from imposing regulations needed to curb the gambling industry's excesses.

Awareness about the negative aspects of the gambling culture in the state has drawn increased interest from media outlets in the state and beyond, resulting in over 40 news pieces during 2023. Most notable were an in-depth interview with The Guardian, and contributions to the New York Times and 60 Minutes for gambling stories they have in the works. New Jersey and gambling industry publications have regularly featured the Council in their stories. Such news coverage is crucial to the Council's efforts to counter the volume of pro-gambling marketing by large multi-national companies.

In late November, we continued our biannual tradition of our week-long residence at the State House in Trenton, during which we experienced an exceptionally busy session day. The State House presence gives us the opportunity to meet with legislators and their staff to build awareness about gambling issues and offer our expertise as lawmakers consider legislation to address rising concerns about gambling. Our next residence at the State House is scheduled for the week of March 11, the second week of Problem Gambling Awareness Month.



CCGNJ offered testimony on several bills recently introduced in the Legislature. One of these, S-4231 (2022-23 legislative session), would require the state's public colleges to include gambling education at schools that partner with sports betting entities. The Council supports the education component of this measure but opposes it being conditioned on schools that form such partnerships. In fact, we strongly believe pairings between colleges and gambling companies should be prohibited. We also urged the use of the 800-GAMBLER Helpline rather than have colleges develop their own helplines.

A second gambling proposal the Legislature considered, A-5308 (2022-23 legislative session), proposes adding gambling prevention education to the curriculum of all New Jersey public schools. The Council gave its full-throated support to this bill for addressing the troubling surge in youth gambling arising from easy access to betting with casino and sports betting apps.

Youth gambling was the focus of a collaboration between the Council and Seton Hall University's Stillman School of Business, which researched betting by 16- to 25-year-olds. Findings included that of those who bet, nearly 8 in 10 (79 percent) started betting before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and just under 4 in 10 (38 percent) started between the ages of 15 and 18. Research has shown early onset of gambling to be a predictor of a gambling problem later in life.

Another youth-focused undertaking that shows great promise is the Cognitive Perspective Restructuring (CPR) Program. Launched by the Council in the spring of 2023, CPR is a prevention program targeting at-risk behaviors that encompass, but are not limited to, gambling. The program also instills self-awareness and discipline while it helps teenagers set attainable goals. School officials in Trenton and Paterson, where CPR has been held, praised the program for its many benefits to their students.

The Council's website recently underwent an upgrade to provide a fresh look and navigation enhancements, including a search engine to help visitors more easily locate resources and help. We also hired new staff to better cover the entire state with awareness presentations as well as to provide treatment providers with developments in the field and to ensure they remain current with their certifications.

Last year's many successes give us a solid foundation on which to build. We will need this strong base in 2024 as we prepare to meet the many challenges presented by New Jersey's ever-shifting and expanding gambling landscape.

**Felicia Grondin, MPA**  
**Executive Director**

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## **CCGNJ Endorses College Gambling Education Measure but Opposes Inclusion of Betting Partnerships**



The Assembly Higher Education Committee ended its 2022-23 legislative session by passing a measure to require gambling education courses at public colleges and universities that partner with sports betting entities. The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) supported the measure, S-4231 (2022-23 Legislative session) but took issue with colleges entering into any such partnerships. To date, no New Jersey colleges, with public or private, have

partnered with gambling companies.

CCGNJ Executive Director Felicia Grondin testified that gambling education for college students was a needed response to increased gambling by undergraduates stemming largely from online betting apps. She offered the Council as a source for gambling presentations, a service Council staff provide throughout the state to a wide variety of demographics, including college students.

The legislation also proposed that colleges create campus helplines for students who may have a gambling problem. Ms. Grondin recommended the schools use the 800-GAMBLER Helpline. She said establishing more helplines could create confusion and noted that the college helplines would lack the expertise provided by the Council staff who field calls to 800-GAMBLER.

Ms. Grondin referred committee members to research undertaken by the Council on gambling by adolescents and undergraduates. The research, performed in conjunction with Seton Hall University's Stillman School of Business, quantified betting frequency by undergraduates, and revealed that more than half of college students who gamble (56 percent) report that they bet every day; of those who indicated that they gamble, 26 percent say they place wagers two or three times a week, with another 10 percent gambling once a week. Findings also show that many young people begin betting as early as 16, well below the legal age of 21. To view CCGNJ research on college and youth gambling, please visit: [Research - 800-Gambler | 800gambler.org](#)

The bill did not advance beyond the committee vote and will most likely be re-introduced in the new legislative session.

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## Long-serving CCGNJ Board Member MaryAnn Rivell Steps Down



*CCGNJ Board Members and staff give a send-off to retiring Board Member MaryAnn Rivell (seated, at the head of the table), who had served on the body since 2005.*

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MaryAnn Rivell recently closed out nearly two decades of service to the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) as a member of its Board of Directors. Ms. Rivell (*pictured at right*) represented the New Jersey Lottery on the CCGNJ Board and on Dec. 31 stepped down as the Lottery's Public Information Officer and Responsible Play Manager.



Ms. Rivell joined the CCGNJ Board in the spring of 2005 and was the longest-serving member aside from Board President Fred W. Hogan. Mr. Hogan expressed his deep appreciation to her for always being able “to find common ground and bring Board members together to ensure the Council’s best interests were always served.”

Fred Andes, another long-serving member of the Board and its Treasurer, noted that Ms. Rivell was “instrumental in updating the Board of Directors and council staff on legislative issues related to gambling. This was vital because it helped the Council prepare testimony for legislative sessions at which these issues were addressed. She will be sorely missed.”

Ms. Rivell played an important role in the partnership between the Lottery and CCGNJ. The two organizations collaborated on campaigns to prevent underage Lottery play and promote responsible Lottery play. Ms. Rivell contributed to scripts for videos the Lottery produced for these campaigns. She also attended the quarterly Responsible Gambling Working Group meetings hosted by CCGNJ, providing legislative updates at each session.

During her tenure on the Board, New Jersey’s gambling landscape underwent significant changes and expansion, particularly as online and sports betting were legalized. To address this new gambling culture, Ms. Rivell stressed the need to continue to “expand public awareness about the dangers of underage gambling, and for adults, to be aware of the importance of responsible play and the influence of aggressive gambling advertising and marketing.”

To build on efforts to confront underage gambling, Ms. Rivell cited the importance of the CCGNJ’s Cognitive Perspective Restructuring (CPR) Program, which instills resilience in youth for risky behaviors including gambling: “The continued expansion of the CPR Program will teach kids to make good life choices, along with addressing the risks that come with engaging in gambling. CPR is an important initiative to prevent underage gambling and to avert adult problem gambling.”

She said she regards her time with the Council as an honor and praised the organization’s gambling awareness efforts and the 800-GAMBLER Helpline, which provides critical help and resources to problem gamblers and their families. “The dedication of the Council staff in working to provide hope and help for individuals with gambling disorders, as well as their efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of excessive gambling, has made me very proud throughout my service as a Board member.”



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## CCGNJ, NJ Lottery Annual 'Gift Responsibly' Campaign Stresses Harm of Early Exposure to Gambling

Maintaining a holiday tradition, the New Jersey Lottery (NJL) recently partnered with the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, Inc. (CCGNJ) to foster awareness about Lottery tickets being an inappropriate holiday gift for minors. During the holidays and throughout the year, the Lottery is committed to the prevention of underage gambling. This year’s campaign continues a long collaboration



between the NJL and CCGNJ.

“Lottery tickets are popular gift choices to slip into a card or include as a stocking stuffer during the holiday season, but we caution parents and other adults against gifting lottery tickets to children,” said NJL Executive Director James A. Carey, Jr. *(pictured above at right, with CCGNJ's Felicia Grondin and Luis Del Orbe)*. “New Jersey law requires lottery purchasers to be 18 years of age or older. While the law does not prohibit adults from giving tickets to minors, research suggests that this is not a good idea.”

To reinforce these messages, the Lottery and the CCGNJ have developed a video urging residents to use good judgement when making holiday gift selections for children. The video, which is available for viewing on the “Responsible Play” page of the Lottery’s website and on the CCGNJ’s website, explains the potential danger in involving minors in Lottery play and other forms of gambling before they are old enough to understand the risks. In addition to the video, the Lottery has also developed a holiday advertising campaign that includes the messaging, “Tis the season to gift responsibly. Lottery is not child’s play.”

CCGNJ Executive Director Felicia Grondin and the Council’s Treatment and Prevention Administrator Luis Del Orbe took part in the campaign launch and the accompanying video. Ms. Grondin thanked the Lottery for its ongoing support in raising awareness about youth involvement in the Lottery. Gambling by youth is a worsening problem due to gaming, social media exposure to gambling ads and ease of access through cell phones and computers.

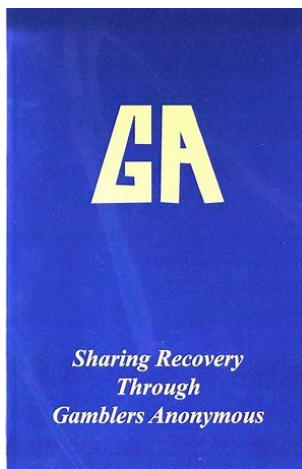
Mr. Del Orbe, who makes presentations in schools throughout the state, reinforced the message about the potential harms that can come of youth gambling and urged adults to refrain from gifting Lottery tickets to children. He noted that youth tend to view gambling as a source of income rather than a form of entertainment. Early exposure to betting, he said, often leads to problem gambling later in life.

Mr. Del Orbe developed the CCGNJ’s Cognitive Perspective Restructuring (CPR) Program, which builds resilience in youth to avoid risky behavior including gambling. The free prevention-based program, which was launched last spring, has been presented in New Jersey public schools in Paterson, Trenton and elsewhere. CPR’s early success has spurred considerable interest throughout the state, and a train-the-trainer initiative is under way to help meet the growing demand. To learn more about the CPR program, email Miquia Delvalle at [miquia@800gambler.org](mailto:miquia@800gambler.org) or visit [Cognitive Perspective Restructuring \(CPR\) Program | Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey \(800gambler.org\)](http://CognitivePerspectiveRestructuring(CPR)Program|CouncilonCompulsiveGamblingofNewJersey(800gambler.org))

Holiday Campaign video link: [NJ Lottery | Responsible Gaming | A conversation about gifting responsibly during the holidays \(youtube.com\)](http://NJLottery|ResponsibleGaming|Aconversationaboutgiftingresponsiblyduringtheholidays(youtube.com))

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## GA Releases First Revised Edition of Blue Book in 40 Years



Gamblers Anonymous (GA) recently published an updated Blue Book, the first such revision in nearly 40 years. The purpose of the book is to better serve both new and current members in their search for recovery from gambling addiction.

Specifically, members wanted a book that would:

- Function as a how-to for GA
- Facilitate working with sponsees
- Help members quickly understand the process
- Be something that would help anyone understand the program

The previous edition of the Blue Book was dated and generally not being widely used by the fellowship, according to Tom S., a

member of the committee charged with producing an updated book. Considerable changes have taken place in gambling since 1984, including online sports betting and the proliferation of casinos.

“Mostly gone are the days of cigar-smoking horse players and sports bettors dropping a dime in a payphone and calling a bookie,” Tom said. “The gamblers coming to our meetings today are more likely to be casino gamblers, gamblers caught up in state-sponsored gambling, female gamblers and younger gamblers. They didn’t find a connection to the Blue Book of 1984.”

The revised book reflects changes that have already occurred in most GA meetings, including an effort to be more inclusive and an emphasis that meetings be solution-based — including recovery steps — rather than “war story” based.

The book was eight years in the making and was produced by eight active Minnesota GA members with combined sobriety of approximately 120 years. The book is comprised of all original material, with no language borrowed from other twelve-step fellowships (although twelve-step principles and philosophy are woven throughout).

The book encapsulates the vast experience of its contributors and is a storehouse of ideas for recovering gamblers, covering issues such as how to deal with gambling urges, how to go to a meeting, how to get involved in GA, how to choose a sponsor, how to grow in recovery and how to repair relationships. The book also incorporates material from the GA Combo Book.

New chapters were added that address suicide, relapse, sponsorship, and hope and persistence. “The chapter on suicide is extremely important and, until now, was completely missing from GA literature,” Tom S. said.

The new book does not include imperatives such as “you must” or “you have to” statements. Different viewpoints are discussed and the suggestion is made for gamblers to discuss these perspectives with their sponsor or mentors.

The book is valuable for clients of counselors and therapists who choose to pursue their personal recovery journey in GA. Clients may also see themselves in the experiences depicted in the stories section of the book.

To order a copy of the book, please visit [\\*New\\* Blue Book- Sharing Recovery Through Gamblers Anonymous | Gamblers Anonymous](#)

*This article was written by Bill Stein and is published courtesy of the Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling.*

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## CCGNJ Looks to Fill Prevention, Administrative Assistant Openings



The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) is looking for two committed individuals to join in the effort to prevent and address the state's worsening issue of problem gambling. CCGNJ has the following open positions; for complete job descriptions, see the link below:

**Problem Gambling Prevention Specialist (FT):** Present workshops, seminars and conferences on problem gambling to youth, seniors, at-risk populations, faith-based groups, and others; plan and implement prevention, outreach and

educational programs related to problem gambling among at-risk populations; and coordinate with community organizations, faith communities, health entities and others to increase awareness and engage on problem gambling.

**Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director (FT):** Assists the Executive Director in planning and organizing all aspects of the CCGNJ's work; coordinates Council activities with the Executive Director and Office Administrator; provides technical support to staff regarding dissemination of information and preparation of materials on problem gambling to address needs of diverse populations.

If you want to join a great team doing the vital work of helping to address the state's growing gambling problem, please go to: [CCGNJ Job Openings](#)

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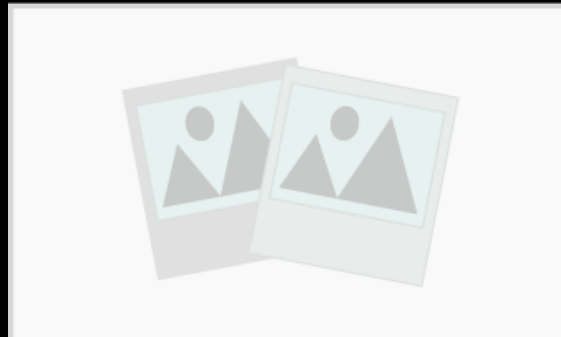
## Book a Presentation or Responsible Gambling Training Session

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](mailto:luis@800gambler.org) to schedule a date.



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Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ, Inc. | 3635 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 7, Hamilton, NJ 08619

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