

The Council Connection

THE COUNCIL ON COMPULSIVE GAMBLING OF NJ

800-GAMBLER

July 2024

A Message from the Executive Director

Governor's Newly Minted Gambling Panel Could Introduce Crucial Reforms



Six years ago, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy was a central figure in *Murphy vs the NCAA*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized sports betting and largely remade the gambling landscape. In mid-June, the Governor issued an executive order creating a blue-ribbon panel to remediate the fallout from gambling's explosive growth since that 2018 court decision. Governor Murphy's Responsible Gaming Task Force is charged with assessing the impact of gambling's now-pervasive presence in our society and making recommendations to reform its excesses. Attorney General Matthew Platkin will chair the group, whose members include officials from six government agencies with gambling oversight. The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ), as a long-established problem gambling authority, stands ready to assist the task force in its vital work.

The very fact that Governor Murphy found it necessary to convene the commission indicates the breadth of New Jersey's gambling culture and the many issues it engenders. It is critical for the task force to focus on problem gambling with the same vigor it brings to responsible gambling (RG), given that New Jersey's rate of problem gambling is three times the national average and the 277 percent spike in calls to the 800-GAMBLER Helpline since sports betting was legalized in 2018.

The CCGNJ is able to offer the task force insights into problem gambling accrued over our four-decade history. Our depth of experience can help develop solutions to issues such as greatly expanded betting access through online apps and excessive advertising that glamorizes gambling to entice young adults and adolescents.

I want to stress that where RG is a preventative strategy, problem gambling awareness centers on the negative impact of disordered gambling and strives to provide support and resources to people with this disorder. Most of the recent gambling messaging by

stakeholders has focused on RG, with little mention of the harm caused by disordered gambling. This omission is particularly troubling as problem gambling, since it is not revealed via physical signs such as those seen with a substance problem, is known as the “hidden addiction” and will remain hidden without a concerted and consistent public awareness initiative to bring it out of the shadows.

The Council advocates for Public Service Announcements and warning labels alerting New Jerseyans to disordered gambling’s devastating, life-altering – sometimes life-ending – consequences. These perils affect not only the gambler but also those close to them; in fact, for every problem gambler, seven family members and other loved ones are impacted. Most alarming is the 20 percent suicide ideation rate of those with a gambling disorder, the highest rate among all forms of addiction.

Citing statistics is certainly important to shape our regulatory practices, but it also is vital for the commission to acquire information and feedback from those who have direct experience with those who are struggling. This is another area where the CCGNJ can assist the Commission, as we provide support, information and resources to the growing number of New Jerseyans facing this issue every day.

As a legislative complement to Governor Murphy’s Task Force, Senator John McKeon introduced a spate of bills to address a host of issues needing attention. While Sen. McKeon expressed his appreciation for the creation of the Task Force, he said he and other advocates do not intend to simply await the body’s report, whose expected release is March of next year. His legislation includes addressing how gaming companies entice future gambling by youth through gaming apps that mirror gambling; the need for a gambling warning label akin to the Surgeon General’s Warning about tobacco products; and the issuance of annual sports betting licenses with some of the revenue allocated to the CCGNJ to meet the increased need for our services.

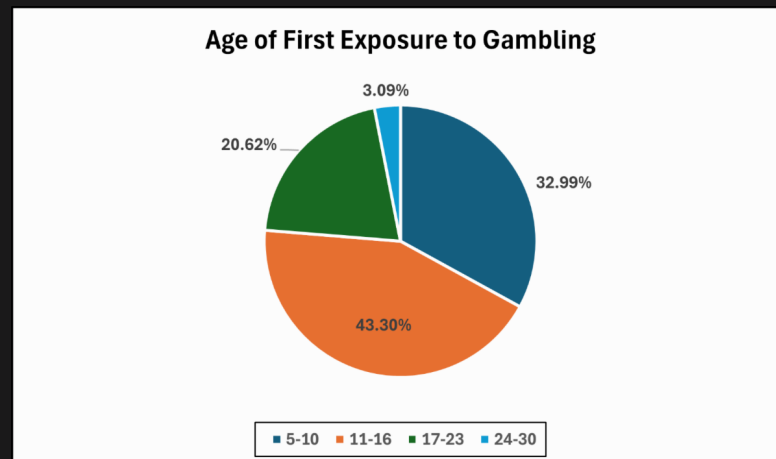
The Council greatly appreciates the response of Governor Murphy and Senator McKeon to New Jersey’s pervasive pro-gambling culture. We look forward to offering our decades of experience to assist them and their fellow lawmakers as they confront the state’s surge in problem gambling.

Felicia Grondin, MPA
Executive Director

CCGNJ Collaborates with TCNJ Students to Research Family's Role in Youth Gambling

This spring the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) partnered with graduate students at the College of New Jersey to research the impact of family gambling on youth and young adults. The survey examined how a family’s gambling, including family gambling traditions, influences youth betting behavior/attitudes and

how that manifests later in life. This study was undertaken as part of CCGNJ’s response to the spike in youth problem gambling seen in recent years.



A large majority of survey respondents (85 percent) report their families having a gambling tradition, ranging from trips to casinos to Lottery scratch-offs to sports

wagering. Fathers were the most frequently named family member engaging in gambling (33 percent), followed by mothers at 15 percent; grandmothers were the third choice at 13 percent.

The most worrisome finding was the high level of early age of exposure to gambling: more than three in four respondents say their introduction to gambling occurred between the ages of 6 and 16, with a third (33 percent) indicating they were introduced to gambling between 6 and 10 (*see chart above*).

CCGNJ Executive Director Felicia Grondin called the findings on the high rate of youth exposure to gambling “disturbing and reflects New Jersey’s gambling culture, which increasingly normalizes betting. Family gambling traditions may seem benign but can lead to serious problems later in life. Research shows that those who start gambling as teenagers are more apt to develop a gambling problem as adults. In addition to family influence, industry advertising glamorizes gambling to entice youth into the growing betting culture.”

More than a quarter of respondents (26 percent) say their family experienced financial hardship as a result of gambling, and one in five (19 percent) report family conflict arising from gambling. One in five of the respondents say they themselves had financial difficulty due to their betting.

The survey’s sample size was 167 with respondents ranging in age from 18-30; all were raised in New Jersey. To read an Executive Summary of this research, go to: [Family Influence on Youth Gambling](#)

CCGNJ Annual Conference to Target State's Surge in Problem Gambling



The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) has opened registration to its annual Conference on Disordered Gambling, whose theme reflects a resolve to meet the varied challenges arising within the state’s increasingly pro-gambling climate: “Betting on Change: Confronting the Surge in Problem Gambling.” The Conference will take place on Friday, September 20, at the New Jersey Hospital Association, 760 Alexander Rd. Princeton, NJ 08540; to register and for related information, see link at bottom of this story.

The Council has seen a dramatic increase in calls to the 800-GAMBLER Helpline since 2018, the year the state legalized sports gambling. The Conference keynote and its closing plenary session will explore different aspects of sports betting. Another plenary session will cover the financial fallout of problem gambling and restoring financial stability, and a third plenary will trace the path to recovery from disordered gambling from both a personal and clinical perspective.

Since the advent of online betting and legalized sports betting, a significant demographic shift finds more and more young people facing a gambling problem. In the spring, CCGNJ partnered with students from The College of New Jersey to research this trend. This project explored family influence on youth and young adult gambling. Findings include a large majority (75 percent) having their first exposure to gambling between the ages of 6 and 16, with a third (33 percent) having been introduced to gambling between 6 and 10.

In addition to early exposure, another factor contributing to youth and young adult gambling is the tremendous amount of pro-gambling advertising, which appeals to younger bettors with glamorous imagery and messaging that minimizes the risk. The conference's concluding session will explore the questionable marketing practices sports betting companies employ as they seek to attract new customers.

The full conference program includes the following keynote and three plenary sessions:

Keynote: "Sports Betting from the Front Line: Treating Sports Betting in a Clinical Practice," presented by Jody Bechthold, LCSW, ICGC-II, BACC, and Rob Bumbaco, LCSW, CMC. The keynote will explore the intersection of sports betting, athletes, and problem gambling, drawing upon current research and risk factors.

Plenary Session 1: "Using Financial Counseling to Address the Financial Harms of Problem Gambling Clients and their Families," presented by Dr. Jessica Parks. A discussion of the financial harms that befall problem gamblers and their loved ones, and how financial planning can help these individuals pay off their debt and return to financial well-being.

Plenary Session 2: "Breaking the Cycle: A Journey from Gambling Disorder to Lasting Recovery," presented by Dr. Martz and Robert Minnick. This session combines the personal narrative of a recovering problem gambler and evidence-based research to clarify the complexities of disordered gambling and the path to recovery.

Plenary Session 3: "Unethical Play in Customer Acquisition by Sportsbooks," presented by Dr. Daniel Ladik and Daniel Sartori of Seton Hall University. This session will identify how sports books entice new players with misleading promotions, targeted appeals and other strategies that, while legal, are in many cases unethical.

For more information about the conference, including registration, becoming a sponsor and/or an exhibitor, please go [CCGNJ Annual Conference](#)



800-GAMBLER Makes Debut at Transit Outlets, Amplifies Social Media Messaging

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) and its 800-GAMBLER Helpline logo, already widely recognized across the state, is expanding its presence on social media as well as at transportation sites and other locations. As gambling becomes increasingly pervasive and pro-gambling ads proliferate, the Council is working to broaden its brand's reach to raise awareness about problem gambling and the resources it offers to help people who are struggling with this



issue.

The CCGNJ's broadened presence on social media includes more frequent and creative postings on Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter). This initiative seeks to counter gambling companies' marketing that targets young adults and adolescents. In addition, the Council's Facebook account is being used more widely, including use of Facebook's 'Things To Do in Your Area' feature to promote upcoming CCGNJ events and presentations.

Apart from social media, the Council's marketing presence will also branch out with displays on customer monitors at 11 Division of Motor Vehicle locations, including Lawrenceville, Wayne, Egg Harbor, Eatontown, Randolph and Lakewood. The :30 ads run on the DMV monitors every 15 minutes.

Displays will also be posted at New Jersey Transit train stations and on its trains to reach commuters throughout the state and summer travelers headed to the shore. Stations that will display posters include Newark, Metro Park, Princeton Junction, and more. Ads will appear on New Jersey Transit trains running throughout the state.

In addition to the new outlets and an expanded social media presence, this summer the Council is augmenting a tried-and-true marketing strategy: billboards. Its newest billboard (pictured above) appears on Rte. 287 outside the Somerset Patriots Ballfield. This ballpark billboard will complement longstanding postings located near Atlantic City, and on major roadways including the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway.

CCGNJ has also adopted Linktree to centralize and enhance access to a host of digital resources. Linktree allows the Council to consolidate all its vital links into a single, easy-to-navigate platform, making it simpler to find support services, educational materials, contact information, and more. Whether you're seeking help, looking to become a treatment provider, or wanting to connect with the Council on social media, our Linktree will guide you to the right place with just one click. To explore all the Council's resources in one, easy-to-find spot, visit our Linktree at [CCGNJ Linktree](#)

CCGNJ's Felicia Grondin Named to National Council's Board of Directors



The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) has named Felicia Grondin (*pictured*), executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ), to its Board of Directors. The announcement of her appointment was made on July 18 at NCPG's Annual Conference in San Diego.

NCPG's mission is to lead awareness and advocacy efforts to reduce gambling harm. As a Board Member, Ms. Grondin will help strengthen the organization and guide policies to meet the growing demand for problem gambling help and resources.

"We are pleased to welcome Felicia Grondin to the Board of Directors," said Susan Sheridan Tucker, President of the NCPG Board of Directors. "Felicia brings many years of expertise that will enhance the strength and impact of our board. We are eager to leverage her talents and insights in this new capacity."

Ms. Grondin, who recently marked her third anniversary as CCGNJ's executive director, said she was humbled by the appointment and is ready to help meet the challenges of the nation's evolving gambling landscape. She said: "Just as New Jersey has had a spike in problem gambling, many states that have legalized betting in recent years are seeing this issue escalate. I look forward to joining with our national counterpart, the National

Council on Problem Gambling, to address the growing threat posed by disordered gambling.”

CCGNJ Board President Fred W. Hogan said of her appointment, “Felicia has been such a tremendous asset to us at the New Jersey Council, first serving on our Board and for the past three years as Executive Director. I have no doubt her experience and commitment will be of great benefit to NCPG’s Board of Directors in meeting the growing challenges arising from gambling across the country.”

CCGNJ enjoys a strong relationship with NCPG, which includes leasing its 1-800-GAMBLER® helpline number to the National organization as the country’s primary helpline for problem and disordered gambling.

Ms. Grondin’s background includes serving as: Legislative Liaison for the New Jersey Casino Control Commission; Associate Director of the Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism at Stockton University; Assistant Dean of Social & Behavioral Sciences (Stockton University); Chief of Staff for a New Jersey Legislator; and has owned/operated private businesses. During her career Ms. Grondin conducted a variety of gambling research studies and wrote articles that appeared in domestic and international publications.

Council Fills Prevention Specialist Opening; Full Statewide Staffing Now in Place



The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey (CCGNJ) welcomed Jeanne Swain (*pictured*) as its newest Prevention Specialist. Her hiring gives the Council a full complement of staff responsible for covering all of New Jersey’s 21 counties to raise awareness about gambling issues to students, seniors, veterans, LGBTQ individuals and other demographic groups. Ms. Swain’s territory includes Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset and Hunterdon counties.

An experienced workshop presenter, business owner, community volunteer and team builder, Ms. Swain has a diverse

background ideally suited to the Prevention Specialist position. In addition to her wide-ranging professional and volunteer background, she has personal experience with problem gambling issues. In her presentations, Ms. Swain brings her full life experience.

Ms. Swain said she chooses this work because she is drawn to the advocacy aspect of the position. By bringing awareness not only to those who are vulnerable, but also to the community at large, CCGNJ works to seeking help. “Every life touched deserves support,” she said.

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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