



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Problem Gambling and Mental Health Disorders: Start the Conversation in March

*The New York Council on Problem Gambling and the Mental Health Association of New York State partner during National Problem Gambling Awareness Month to raise awareness of the relationship between problem gambling and mental health*

In honor of Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM), the New York Council on Problem Gambling (NYCPG) and the Mental Health Association of New York State (MHANYS) are partnering together to bring light to the connections between problem gambling and mental health disorders.

Problem gambling affects millions of Americans, families, and communities every day. Nearly 2 million U.S. adults meet the diagnostic criteria for gambling disorder, and another 4-6 million experience problems due to their gambling. Those with co-occurring mental health and psychiatric disorders are at an increased risk of developing a gambling problem.

“For years we have watched individuals and families experiencing problem gambling also struggle with anxiety, depression and even suicide. We are pleased to partner with MHANYS this month and throughout 2018 to raise awareness of the issues facing those with co-occurring mental health and gambling disorders”, said James Maney, Executive Director of NYCPG.

Two-thirds of gamblers surveyed reported that their mental health suffered as a result of their gambling. (Nash et al, 2018). In fact, the majority of those experiencing disordered gambling have a lifetime history of a psychiatric disorder. In addition to struggling with gambling:

- Over 60% also have a personality disorder.
- Over 49% also have a mood disorder.
- Over 41% also have an anxiety disorder. (Petry et al, 2005)
- Nearly 37% of those experiencing a gambling problem and 50% of those with disordered gambling have had suicidal thoughts. Over 17% of these individuals have attempted suicide. (Moghaddam et al, 2015)

Problem gambling does not just affect the individual who is gambling, but also his or her loved ones. In one study over 90% of those affected by someone else’s gambling behavior reported emotional distress. (Nash et al, 2018)

According to MHANYS CEO Glenn Liebman, “people need to understand the link between problem gambling and other mental illnesses, and the similarity between a gambling disorder and substance use disorders. This understanding is vital so that those impacted directly and indirectly by problem gambling can appreciate the necessity of treatment. In most cases, it’s unrealistic to believe that someone suffering from these disorders can recover without help”, said Liebman. “Maintaining this belief can have devastating consequences on those who suffer and their families, including financial ruin and suicide.”

**NYCPG and MHANYS are asking substance abuse and mental health providers to join us in starting the conversation about problem gambling and mental health this month. In order to support professionals in their efforts, the two organizations have created resources for substance abuse and mental health professionals and clients. These resources are available on the NYCPG Problem Gambling Awareness Month Info Page found [HERE](#).**

In addition, NYCPG and MHANYS will take on the following activities in 2018 to help spread awareness of the connections between problem gambling, mental health, and suicide:

- Publish a problem gambling specific articles in the MHANYS newsletter
- Integrate problem gambling information into suicide specific trainings
- Develop and present a suicide and problem gambling workshop at the NYCPG Annual Conference
- Offer problem gambling treatment training to mental health professionals through the [Problem Gambling Training Partnership](#)
- Provide co-occurring mental health and problem gambling webinars free of charge to NYS professionals through the [NYCPG Training Center](#). Topics will include problem gambling and its relation to suicide, ADHD, trauma, and personality disorders.
- Promoting National Gambling Disorder Screening Day – March 13, 2018

Start the conversation with your coworkers and employees. Start the conversation with your clients. Start the conversation with your family members. Let’s all do our part to help raise awareness about mental health conditions and problem gambling.

Information about the above resources and events can be found at on the NYCPG Problem Gambling Awareness Month Info Page found [HERE](#).

The New York Council on Problem Gambling (NYCPG) is a not-for-profit independent corporation dedicated to increasing public awareness about problem and compulsive gambling and advocating for support services and treatment for persons adversely affected by problem gambling. NYCPG maintains a neutral stance on gambling and is governed by a Board of Directors. Find out more at [NYProblemGambling.org](http://NYProblemGambling.org).

MHANYS is a not-for-profit organization that works to end the stigma against mental illness and promote mental health wellness in New York State. MHANYS achieves this through training, education, advocacy and policy, community-based partnership programming, and by connecting individuals and families to help. Find out more at [MHANYS.org](http://MHANYS.org).

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