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**Problem Gambling in the Work Place:
*Start the Conversation in March***

In honor of Problem Gambling Awareness Month, the New York Council on Problem Gambling (NYCPG) is partnering with the New York State Employee Assistance Program (NYS-EAP) and other employee assistance programs across the state to raise awareness of the connections between problem gambling and problems in the workplace.

In the last decade, gambling has become a mainstream activity in our culture, leading to access to gambling opportunities in several places including the workplace. Sometimes, gambling in the workplace is used as a shield to hide the problem gambling from family members. Additionally, work can sometimes serve as an escape for those who are struggling with a loved one's gambling problem. The effects of problem gambling on the workplace include a loss of time, loss of productivity, and more extreme effects such as theft, fraud and embezzlement. For these reasons, it's important that employers and the workforce are educated about the warning signs of problem gambling, and that employee assistance programs are prepared to assist those struggling.

Nearly 668,000 adults in New York State are struggling with a gambling problem – this equates to 5% of the adult population (2006 OASAS Adult Problem Gambling Household Survey). Problem gambling is not limited to financial issues, but also causes other problems in the lives of those struggling. Additional problems can include other addiction issues; depression, mental health and suicide; and decreased productivity at work.

Problem gambling does not just affect the individual who is gambling, but also his or her loved ones. One study revealed that upwards of 90% of individuals affected by someone else's gambling experience emotional distress (Nash et al). Research has shown that each individual's gambling problem affects between 8 and 10 additional people, including family, friends and coworkers. That equates to an addition 6.7 million people in New York who are affected by problem gambling!

"Every day, thousands of New Yorkers are affected by problem gambling. Contrary to popular thought, the negative effects of problem gambling do not stay at home. They are often brought to the workplace and affect atmosphere and productivity. We are pleased to partner with employee assistance programs across the state to bring awareness to this issue and to connect those struggling to the support they need," said **James Maney, Executive Director of NYCPG.**

Workplace specific warning signs of problem gambling include:

- Deterioration of work performance;
- Frequent, unexplained absences from work;
- Preoccupation with gambling opportunities in the workplace such as sports pools, betting opportunities, etc.;
- Frequently borrowing money from coworkers, or arguing with coworkers about financial issues;
- Requests for pay in advance, or cashing in retirement or vacation time;

- Mood swings or a change in personality; and
- Verbalizing the negative effects of gambling on one's life.

“Through the Employee Assistance Program, GOER is pleased to provide services and support to identify and resolve personal, family, and workplace issues so that our fellow colleagues can live healthier, happier, and more productive lives,” said **Governor’s Office of Employee Relations Director Michael N. Volforte**. “We are pleased to partner with our labor management committees, along with community organizations like the New York Council on Problem Gambling, to offer this Program, which is confidential, voluntary, and offered at no cost to state employees and their families.”

NYCPG and NYS-EAP are asking all professionals to join us in starting the conversation about problem gambling in the work place this month. In order to support professionals in their efforts, these two organizations have created resources for professionals in the field to help identify gambling problems in the workplace and where to get help. These resources are available on the NYCPG Problem Gambling Awareness Month Info Page found [HERE](#).

In addition to Problem Gambling Awareness Month efforts, NYCPG and NYS-EAP will work together to bring this information to regional and local employee assistance programs throughout the state beginning in the fall of 2019.

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 how problem gambling affects people in their workplace.

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.

The New York State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a worksite-based program designed to help state employees deal with the everyday issues involved in balancing work and life, as well as more serious problems that may impact work performance. EAP services are confidential, voluntary, and offered at no cost to employees and their families. Find out more at <https://goer.ny.gov/employee-assistance-program>.

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