

# CONNECTICUT CONNECTIONS

## April 2000

### Executive Director's Report

Having just returned from the retreat of the Board of Directors of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), I am very pleased to report continued significant progress made by the national office and state affiliates in addressing problem and underage gambling. At that time, I conducted a survey of the perceptions of NCPG board members relative to the recommendations of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) which had been disseminated in June 1999.

Responses were received from 29 of the 48 board members who were given/sent the survey. Respondents included representatives of 22 of the 34 state councils and 7 of the 12 at-large board members. The respondents are a representative sample of NCPG board members across the United States. I plan to again survey the board about perceived progress in this area at the next NCPG meeting in October 2000.

The results indicate the following:

1. Overall, board members viewed the NGISC study as highly valuable to the field of problem gambling, slightly exceeding their initial expectations.
2. There was general agreement that the study had a positive effect on the relationship between the NCPG (and its affiliates) and the gaming industry.
3. The board members perceived the study as having only a low to moderate effect on the public's awareness of the issues related to problem gambling.
4. Board members viewed the study as having had a very limited effect on the introduction of Congressional or state legislation.
5. The overwhelming impression was that the study has had no effect on whether legalized gambling has expanded or decreased.
6. Less than half of the board members sampled viewed the NCPG and its affiliates as having taken sufficient actions with regard to forwarding or implementing the NGISC recommendations. It was, therefore, not surprising that one of the most enthusiastic work groups at the January board retreat focused on implementation of the NGISC recommendations. This group was chaired by new at-large board member Leo McCarthy, who was one of the nine commissioners responsible for carrying out the NGISC study.

The NGISC worked diligently for two years and it is in the hands of the NCPG to advocate for and help mobilize support for the recommendations that relate to problem and underage gambling.

Prevention of Problem Gambling Team

The Prevention Team is a collaboration of Connecticut organizations concerned with the issue of problem gambling. The following representatives meet to discuss prevention efforts throughout the state geared toward problem gambling: Dawn Hemstock, Susan McLaughlin and Marvin Steinberg of the CCPG, Ted Nikolla and Annie Chittenden of the Citizens' Task Force on Addictions, Christopher Armentano and James Wuelfing of the Department of Mental Health and Addictions Services (DMHAS) Compulsive Gambling Treatment Program (CGTP).

The DMHAS' CGTP set forth its Prevention Plan for Problem Gambling in June of 1998. The goals and objectives of the plan include:

- raising public awareness;
- developing skills of prevention resources;
- developing community capacity;
- advocacy for public and social policy reviews and initiatives;
- developing alternative activities to gambling;
- addressing early intervention needs of high-risk groups; and
- promoting research on problem gambling.

The Prevention Team seeks to integrate the prevention goals and objectives of each of the three member organizations and to facilitate implementation of priority prevention programs.

#### CT Partnership for Responsible Gambling

CT Partnership for Responsible Gambling has moved forward in its public education campaign with a brochure designed for parents on youth gambling, *"What are the odds your teen is gambling?"* This brochure will soon be disseminated throughout the state. There have also been partnership billboards advertising the "play responsibly" theme with the Helpline number. The members of the partnership are the Connecticut Lottery Corporation, CCPG and DMHAS' CGTP.

#### "Problem Gambling Tonight"

In November 1999, the CCPG launched an innovative radio program to reach the public with problem gambling issues. The program is primarily available to listeners in the 20 towns in south central Connecticut as well as a limited part of Long Island. The program airs on WELI (960AM) on Tuesdays from 8 – 9 p.m. It is sponsored by contributions from Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun.

Problem Gambling Tonight is co-hosted by Marvin Steinberg and Susan McLaughlin and involves interviews in the studio and by telephone with a variety of experts including therapists, researchers, educators, attorneys and gaming employees. Especially important are the true-life sharings of guests who are recovering gamblers and family members and the input of callers who comment and raise questions.

#### Committee on Youth Gambling Awareness and Action

The Committee on Youth Gambling Awareness and Action was recently established by two legislative co-chairs, Representatives Andrea Stillman and Steve Dargan, to examine issues and develop programs related to underage gambling in the state of

Connecticut. Participating agencies and organizations in addition to the CCPG include: The Citizens' Task Force on Addictions, DMHAS, State Department of Education, The Connecticut Lottery Corporation, Division of Special Revenue, Department of Public Safety and the University of Connecticut Health Center.

#### Recent Happenings at the CCPG

Susan McLaughlin has joined the Helpline Committee of the NCPG. The Helpline Committee is currently developing a survey to be distributed to all affiliate councils of the NCPG to collect information concerning Helpline operations and ideas about the future of the national Helpline.

The CCPG has also collaborated with Yale University to revise the Helpline data intake form. This form is available to other affiliate councils upon request from CCPG.

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Dawn Hemstock and Susan McLaughlin presented a workshop on problem gambling and other addictions to the Guilford Improv Troupe. This high school age youth group performs skits on substance use, teen violence and other teen related issues. The next step will be the development of a skit that focuses on problem gambling to be performed at Guilford High School.

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*The New England Regional Conference on Women's Mental Health: Research, Practice and Experience* was held September 27 and 28, 1999 at the Hartford Marriott Farmington in Hartford, Connecticut. This event, which drew over 300 people from around New England and the United States, was sponsored by the U.S. Public Health Service's Office on Women's Health, Region I, the US Department of Health and Human Services and the DMHAS' CGTP. Susan McLaughlin, along with Rosemary Poole (United Community and Family Services) and Annie Chittendon (Citizens' Task Force on Addictions) presented the workshop "Women and Problem Gambling". Included in the presentation were: an overview of the social and historical context in which gambling problems develop; gender specific problem gambling activities; and prevention strategies. Ms. McLaughlin also staffed the CCPG's information table at the Conference.

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On October 13, 1999, Foxwoods Resort Casino hosted a Health & Wellness Fair for employees and casino patrons. Information on responsible gambling and the risks associated with gambling were provided to employees and the public. In addition to Susan McLaughlin, Dawn Hemstock and Marvin Steinberg of the CCPG, Annie Chittendon (Citizens' Task Force on Addictions) and Claire Bradley (Foxwoods) tended the table and interacted with the many people who stopped by.

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Susan McLaughlin participated on the faculty of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling's training series, "Understanding, Assessing and Treating

Compulsive Gambling" on November 5, 1999. Ms. McLaughlin presented the session "Compulsive Gambling Among Women".

#### NCPG Election and Board Meeting

The CCPG was represented by Marvin Steinberg at the January meeting and retreat of the Board of Directors of the NCPG. The NCPG board, including representatives of the affiliate councils, addressed a number of national and state issues related to problem and underage gambling. Plans were developed to initiate and continue collaboration in the following work areas: prevention programs; legislation for funding for treatment and insurance parity for problem gambling; evaluation of the national Helpline; underage gambling; targeting special populations; and the National Gambling Impact Study Commission recommendations (discussed in the Executive Director's Report). The NCPG has made major growth strides in the last year, including the appointment of Keith Whyte as Executive Director, relocation of the office to Washington, DC, revision of the by-laws and a major contribution to the recommendations of the NGISC.

The recently elected officers of the NCPG are:

President: Charles Maurer, Ph.D.

Affiliation: President of the Washington State Council on Problem Gambling

Executive Vice President: Carol O'Hare

Affiliation: Executive Director of the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling

Vice President: Marvin A. Steinberg, Ph.D. (re-elected)

Affiliation: Executive Director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

Treasurer: Lisa Pertzoff (reelected)

Affiliation: Executive Director of the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems

Secretary: Betty Greer

Affiliation: Executive Director of the Mississippi Council on Problem and Compulsive Gambling

#### Casino Training of Supervisors

As a part of the on-going collaboration with Foxwoods Resort Casino, Marvin Steinberg provided training in responsible gambling for approximately 1,000 supervisors from table games, slots, bingo, security, credit, cage, transportation, marketing, gaming commission, advertising, employee relations, food and beverage. Within this group, the upper level gaming supervisors (approximately 150) will be certified in responsible gaming by the Connecticut Committee for Problem Gambling Awareness. The committee is chaired by the Division of Special Revenue and has representatives from the lottery, both casinos, the two dog tracks, Jai Alai, Sports Haven, DMHAS' CGTP and the CCPG. Certification training will also be provided in the future for upper level supervisors at all of these gambling facilities. Over the next several months, the committee will be developing training materials, forming the training teams and creating a training schedule.