
Gambling addiction features random destruction

You're reaching into a bowl, about to draw out a name. You know these people, all 100 of them, because you wrote their names yourself – the first 100 names that came to your mind. They are your spouse, children, your family, friends, business associates, competitors, dentists, accountants, neighbors -- those sorts of people.

You're going to draw out two, or three, or four names – but not for Christmas gifts. You're randomly picking people whose lives will be destroyed. This is a bitter game.

People are, of course, more than names, and your community is not a bowl, but the metaphor is a useful way of illustrating just how legalized gambling damages communities across our nation. It just doesn't seem possible to predict who will be caught in the snare of gambling addiction, but sooner or later it becomes desperately personal, touching families just like yours.

Such was the story of David Williams, as told by Indiana attorney David Noffsinger during the September NCALG conference in Baltimore, MD.

Williams, explained the attorney, was an auditor for the State of Indiana. He was a model citizen, so frugal and conservative that he clipped coupons to buy tooth paste. His home paid mortgage was paid off, and he had a net worth of about \$175,000, which he had accomplished on an annual salary of \$42,000. Then came an advertisement with a "free" \$20 gift card to the new Aztar riverboat casino. David went to the riverboat, and lost his free \$20. But he soon returned, and lost \$800 of his own money. "It was downhill from there," Noffsinger said.

It takes longer for most people to become addicted. One might have to wait three or four years to draw out those last three or four names from the bowl of destruction, but David's name came up quickly.

In March of 1997, Noffsinger related, David lost more than his entire year's wages. His girl-

friend was worried, and told Aztar what they were doing to her friend. In March of 1998, he lost \$44,000 in two days. Armed with a suicide note he had written, David's girlfriend had him committed for psychiatric treatment, and sent Aztar a certified letter including his financial records and the suicide note as proof of what they were doing to this good man.

While David was "locked up," the casino "banned" him until he could prove he was well enough to gamble again. But within a year, he was back on the mailing list, using his "fun card" and deepening his addiction, until he lost everything, including his home.

Noffsinger said David Williams stands apart

Trusted California city manager charged with embezzling \$256,000 for gambling

In the course of three years, Dennis Blundell allegedly embezzled \$256,000 from the city of Murrieta, Calif., coffers and gambled it away.

A former Murrieta building and safety manager, and a well-respected man in the community, Blundell said this week that he won and lost hundreds of thousands of dollars at the Pechanga Resort & Casino, southwest of Temecula, trying to feed an insatiable addiction.

"(Gambling addiction) is a problem much larger than anyone wants to look at," Blundell said, sitting in the office of his attorney, John Pozza. "The pitfalls are tremendous. It took me to the point where I was engaged in things I wouldn't normally have done."

Blundell was arrested in July for allegedly altering 34 checks made out to the city, which police say he put his own name on and deposited into his personal account. He subsequently resigned from his job and has been released from jail on \$100,000 bail.

http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2003/10/18/news/top_stories/10_17_0318_51_47.txt

from other cases where addicts have sued casinos. This time, there is absolute proof the casino knew what they were doing, and to whom.

They always know, Noffsinger said. They keep track of everything their customers do, how long they stay, at what machines, and how much they lose. It's part of their marketing plan. They took everything David Williams owned, including his self control. They created an addict. They knew it. They banked on it.

“Gambling is an addictive behavior, make no mistake about it. . . . Gambling has all the properties of a psychoactive substance, and again, the reason is that it changes the neurochemistry of the brain.”

-- Howard J. Shaffer, Harvard Division on Addictions, 1995

Entertainment? Perhaps, for some. For others, it is an addictive, hidden trap. Gambling is not like “shopping or the movies.” It is a deadly roulette that is damaging, destroying and even killing Americans every day. The damage is part of the plan. It’s what provides the profit.

David’s story is repeated 24-hours a day, 365 days a year across America as legalized gambling attempts to enlarge its attack against American homes and families. Gambling addiction crosses every social and economic barrier, but it is largely an invisible disease. Victims don’t come to work with dice on their breath.

Gambling seriously damages or destroys the lives of as many as five percent of the population in communities where it is allowed to mature. In the years before the past decade’s proliferation of gambling, compulsive gambling affected less than one percent of the general population. The National Gambling Impact Study released in 1999 conservatively estimated that decade’s

wave of gambling expansion had produced no fewer than 1.5 million new compulsive gamblers. Studies of mature gambling markets indicate about 2.5 percent of all market area adults have become pathological gamblers and another 3 to 3.5 percent are inflicting heavy damage on themselves and their families as “problem gamblers.”

Those problems range from suicide to crime, corruption, addiction and bankruptcy. Even more frightening is the rise in problems among youth, who are twice as likely to become addicted. Youth take their signals from adults, and in societies where gambling is practiced and condoned by adults and even promoted by government, it is foolish to assume young people will not become involved.

Researchers now call gambling the fastest growing teenage addiction, with the rate of pathological gambling among high school and college-age youth about twice that of adults. According to Dr. Howard J. Shaffer, Director of the Harvard Medical School Center for Addiction Studies, “Today, there are more children experiencing adverse symptoms from gambling than from drugs...and the problem is growing.”

Gambling becomes an addiction and is listed among the disorders defined by America’s psychiatric standards.

Experts on pathological gambling believe that the prevalence rate of this disorder is linked to the accessibility and acceptability of gambling. In short, the more legalized gambling a state makes available, the more pathological behavior is triggered. And fast-paced gambling that maximizes the number of wagering opportunities, like casinos and video gambling machines, also maximizes gambling addiction.

In Iowa, a study released in July 1995 found that 5.4 percent of the state’s adults (roughly 110,000 residents) are lifetime pathological or problem gamblers. Before riverboats came to that state, only 1.7 percent of Iowans were lifetime pathological or problem gamblers. In other words, the legalization of casinos more than tripled the addiction problem.

Study affirms machines’ addiction much faster than ‘traditional’ forms

A recent study has again illustrated electronic gambling “machines” produce gambling addicts at a deadly pace.

The study, titled “Rapid Onset of Pathological Gambling in Machine Gamblers” illustrates the addictive new trends toward machine gambling sweeping the nation. The work emanates from the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the Brown University School of Medicine, under the authorship of Robert B. Breen and Mark Zimmerman.

Briefly, the study illustrates “latency of onset” of pathological gambling is about one year, compared to three and a half for more “traditional” gambling. (1.08 years vs. 3.58 years, by the study’s averages.)

The authors also noted the remarkable shift in gambling profit dynamics in recent years. Table games once accounted for 60% of the average casino’s revenues. Recently, 70 percent of revenues have come from machines. “One study of the two hugely successful casinos in Connecticut reported that an estimated 73% of casino gambling revenue came from gambling machines. (Christiansen Capital Advisors, 2000.)”

The study explains, “. . . many slots players describe the machines as reassuringly hypnotic. The visual stimuli, the repetitive pattern of betting and outcome, and the chance to withdraw into one’s own world are features that may contribute to this perception. Machines are the most continuous medium of gambling. Bets can be made and decided in a matter of seconds, with virtually no delay before the pattern is repeated. Machines are non-threatening and user-friendly to the uninitiated, thus they may offer an unparalleled ‘gateway’ activity to gambling.”

NCALG is the first and only national grassroots organization formed to stop the spread of legalized gambling and the misery it causes

In his testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Professor Earl Grinols of the University of Illinois, a nationally acclaimed expert on the economics of gambling, presented evidence that pathological and problem gamblers, representing only 4 percent of the adult population, account for 52 percent of an average casino's revenues. "In this respect, casino gambling resembles alcohol for which 6.7 percent of the population consumes 50 percent of all alcohol consumed."

Internet gambling stands as a looming threat where lives can be sucked empty in the dark secret corners of homes around the world, with an unflinching industry feeding on the pains unseen victims. Internet gambling offers universal immediate access to off-track betting, video gambling, sports booking and video gambling, all highly addictive.

Americans today wager more than they spend on food, including dining out. They lose more on gambling than they spend on all other forms of entertainment combined, including movies, sporting events, theatres and music.

Across the nation, crime and corruption have become both more common and more spectacular as the industry matures more addicts. Parents have killed children to collect insurance so they can keep gambling, and in one highly publicized case, parents convinced their daughter she was dying of cancer so they could collect charitable contributions. The girl did not have cancer, but the parents did have a gambling problem.

Motorcycle club treasurer arrested for taking \$108,000 for gambling

The former treasurer for the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club of Wisconsin embezzled \$108,000 raised by the organization to aid needy veterans and lost it gambling, according to an affidavit filed Monday in Waukesha County Circuit Court.

The 56-year-old Navy veteran, was urged by the club president to repay the money by selling his home or his car, according to the affidavit filed by a Waukesha County Sheriff's Department detective.

But the man revealed he already has two mortgages on his home and his car is worth only \$50. "There's nothing there," he told the president, according to local reports

He added, however, that the club could have his motorcycle, according to the affidavit.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/wauk/oct03/180561.aspe>

Gambling is an industry that is grinding up citizens, families, children and communities at an alarmingly increasing rate.

This does not need to continue. The National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, (NCALG) was formed in 1994 to combat the expansion of gambling. NCALG and state grassroots organizations were successful in lobbying Congress to fund the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, which in 1999 called unanimously for a moratorium on gambling expansion until the social costs could be better evaluated.

States have generally chosen to ignore that finding, and the battle continues across the nation, especially where states have found themselves with budget shortfalls.

As the year 2003 closed, there had been 43 battles for the expansion of gambling in 27 states. NCALG's interests won 40 and lost three. This was accomplished despite an overwhelming imbalance of funding.

Executive Director Tom Grey is fond of telling crowds that, "Never before have so few done so much for so long with so little," as has this coalition. Of the volunteer board, he's joked, "We're going to beat them with dentists and grandmothers."

But with one full-time executive director and a part time office manager, NCALG faces a daunting multi-billion dollar gambling adversary. More can be done. More MUST be done.

NCALG needs to print more material, provide more web pages, mail information to more legislators, help educate more local organizations, travel more and meet more people.

NCALG needs your help in both time and resources.

At this critical point in the fight against legalized gambling, we ask you to help. Instead of reaching into that fishbowl to draw out the name of another victim, please reach into your wallet and make a contribution.

We also need your help in spreading the word. Please subscribe to our newsletters.

You can also make a safe and secure donation through our web site, www.ncalg.org, where you can find abundant information on the fight against gambling.

Join us today!

A note from the chairman . . .



Dear friends;

I am Guy Clark, a dentist from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and chairman of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling.

For the past 10 years, I have been striving to defend my family, my community, my state and this nation from damage done by the spread of legalized gambling. Like the other members of our board, I am 100 percent volunteer.

In the past year, my board and I have seen a frightening increase in the pressure to expand gambling across the nation. This pressure is not because of any sincere interest to support community causes or improve community economies. It is a movement to rob the masses to enrich the few.

Gambling breeds in an atmosphere of greed so intense that its industry backers care little or nothing about the lives their product destroys. We have become increasingly aware of the cost gambling is extracting in the suffering of ordinary citizens from all walks of life. Government sanction and even sponsorship of gambling corrupt our youth and enslave American families.

NCALG is the only national organization dedicated entirely to stopping the spread of legalized gambling in America. We are dedicated, efficient and determined. We spend our resources wisely.

We need your help. We need funds to produce and distribute educational materials. We need help with travel to attend grassroots organizing events and to attend local meetings and hearings.

Will you please join us with your financial support?

Guy Clark

Chairman
National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling.



YES! I believe **NOW** is the time to stop the spread of legalized gambling and the pain it causes!

(I understand my check to NCALG is tax deductible under IRS Code 501.c.3)

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