

1-800-GAMBLER

WV'S PROBLEM GAMBLING HELP NETWORK



State Fiscal Year 2023
Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 was filled with many changes, locally and nationally, in the field of gambling addiction treatment. 1-800-GAMBLER is now the national helpline number for problem gambling. In response to this shift, West Virginia's Problem Gambling Help Network (WVPGHN), the entity responsible for fielding calls from within West Virginia, revamped its caller data set to align with the standards set by the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). Additionally, 1-800-GAMBLER expanded its accessibility to include text messaging through short and long codes. The 1-800-GAMBLER hotline is staffed 24/7. This year, 1,589 people contacted the helpline, and 605 completed an intake.

Long-time program director Jennifer Davis-Walton moved into a position with the Virginia Partnership for Gaming & Health. Maricel Bernardo, who has been with First Choice Services (FCS) for seven years and has been a program coordinator specializing in problem gambling prevention for five years, became the new program director. Maricel has a Master of Science in Management-Health Care Administration and is already active in the Prevention, Communication, and Helpline Committees for the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). She assists with the NCPG helpline modernization process. She is also on the Prevention Workgroup Committee with the National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services.

On a national scale, attention has been drawn to the emerging demographic susceptible to problem gambling—youth. This heightened concern is attributed to the rapid proliferation of online casino and sports betting platforms. In West Virginia specifically, the most rapidly escalating form of problematic gambling reported by helpline callers this year was iGaming, particularly mobile casino play.

In FY 2023, WVPGHN generated 36 earned media stories, presented at 33 conferences and seminars, exhibited information on problem gambling at 175 events, distributed outreach material to 26 sites, and awarded 11 new prevention subgrants.

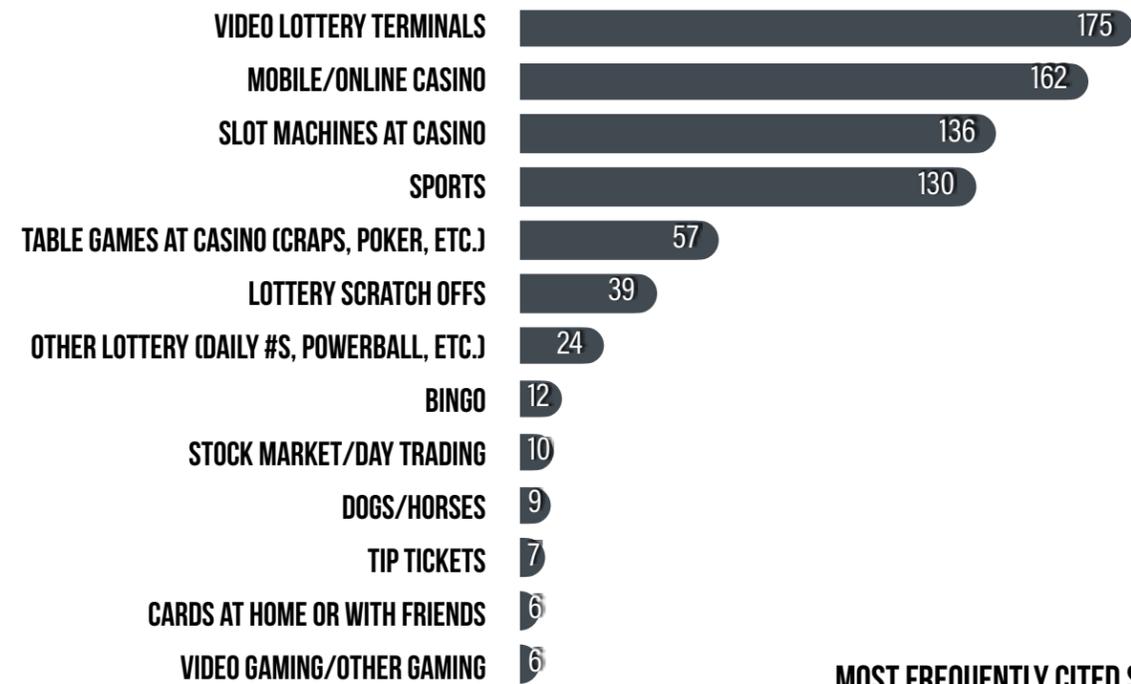
WVPGHN sponsored 50.75 hours of professionally accredited training for 393 social workers, counselors, and addiction professionals. WVPGHN maintained accreditation to provide certified training through the International Gambling Counselor Certification Board (IGCCB).

The partnership between WVPGHN and FCS, the organization entrusted with the operation of 1-800-GAMBLER, has been instrumental in fostering substantial growth opportunities. FCS is the sole entity in West Virginia credentialed by the International Council on Helplines. Operating 15 helplines and programs, FCS boasts a team of over 175 staff members and manages an annual volume exceeding 180,000 calls, texts, and chats. These programs primarily serve West Virginians, offering support across a spectrum of services such as mental health counseling, tobacco cessation, substance use disorder treatment, suicidal ideation, crisis counseling, social services, Affordable Care Act health insurance enrollment, employment barriers, and more. WVPGHN staff members work in close coordination with their counterparts at FCS, providing vital information on accessing assistance for callers experiencing problem gambling. This collaborative approach ensures a seamless and comprehensive support system for individuals seeking help through the helpline.

HELPLINE DATA

The 1-800-GAMBLER telephone, text, and chat services are staffed 24/7. This year, 1,589 people contacted the helpline, and 605 completed an intake. The following represents data from callers who provided information during the intake:

MOST FREQUENTLY CITED TYPES OF GAMBLING:

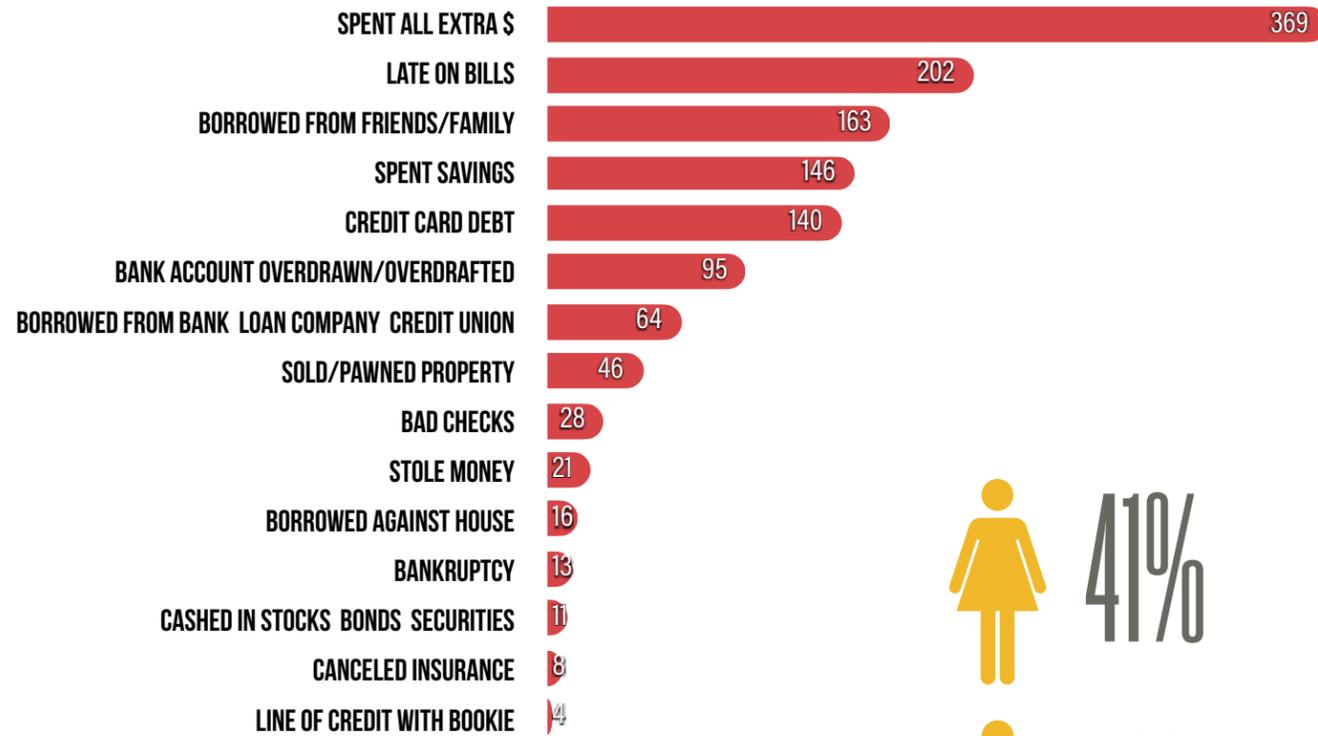


MOST FREQUENTLY CITED SYMPTOMS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING BY HELPLINE CALLERS:



HELPLINE DATA

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS CITED BY HELPLINE CALLERS:



TEN YEARS AGO, ONLY 23% OF HELPLINE CALLERS WERE UNDER AGE 35.

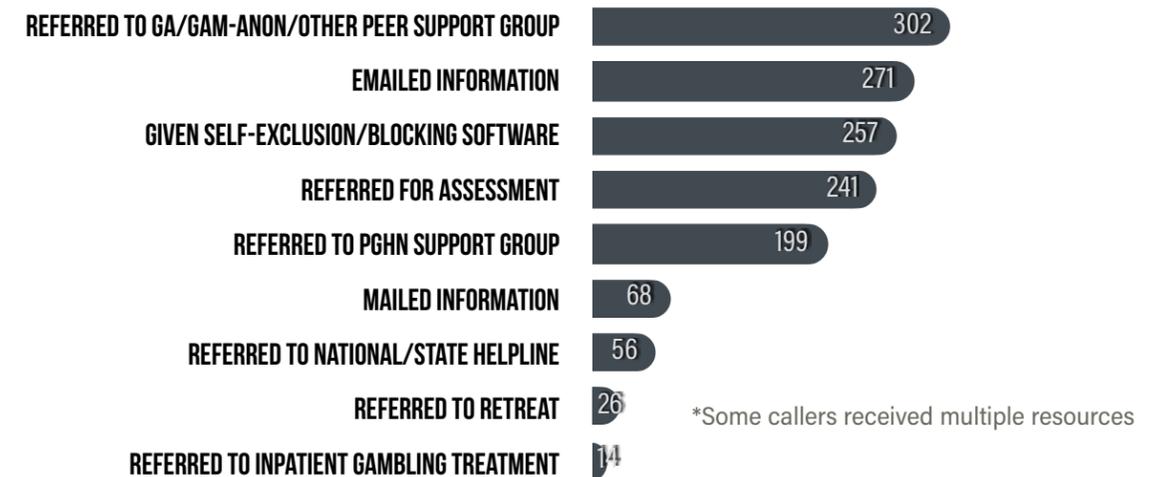
IN FY 2023, 39% WERE UNDER AGE 35.

TREATMENT SERVICES

All callers experiencing a gambling problem or who are concerned about the gambling of a loved one are offered a free consultation with a WVPGHN network clinician. Network clinicians are professionally licensed and have a minimum of 35 hours of training in treating gambling addiction. In FY 2023, 91 people attended an initial consultation. Those unable to pay for additional sessions were offered funds to attend up to 20 therapy sessions. WVPGHN paid for 311 additional sessions of individual therapy.

WVPGHN partners with the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling to offer a twice-monthly online Wellness Call for anyone who wishes to stop gambling or who is in recovery. The Wellness Call combines a support group and a therapy process group. Dr. Heather Chapman, the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Administration Medical Center Gambling Addiction Treatment Program Director, and WVPGHN staff lead the call. There were 188 participants this year, more than twice as many participants as in FY 2022. Examples of topics addressed include financial recovery, reflections shared in a letter, cross-addiction, relapse, and accountability.

RESOURCES GIVEN TO HELPLINE VISITORS:



WVPGHN offers a weekly in-person therapy group in Morgantown and South Charleston. There are currently three in-person Gamblers Anonymous groups in the state. WVPGHN provides each caller information on these meetings, online and telephone Gamblers Anonymous meetings, and inclusive addiction support groups, such as Celebrate Recovery and Smart Recovery.

Helpline callers are offered many other free resources, including:

- Self-help workbooks
- Book/podcast recommendations
- Information on self-exclusion
- Credit counseling and debt relief referrals
- Access to software that blocks gambling sites from computers and mobile devices
- Online forums and other helpful websites
- Referrals for psychiatric treatment or social services resources





Participants at the Spring Retreatment Weekend

retreatment weekend

WVPGHN held a retreatment weekend event in the Fall at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston and in the Spring at Chief Logan State Park in Logan. Each featured 26 sessions covering topics such as spirituality, wellness, the importance of exercise, relaxation techniques, and how gambling affects relationships. Individual counseling and support groups were offered to all participants. There were 49 participants, including those experiencing gambling addiction, FCS staff, and clinical staff.

Pre- and post-retreatment weekend assessments show that participants reported significant improvement in areas of well-being, family relationships, friendships, connectedness, mastering their addiction, looking forward to the future, and participating in valuable non-gambling activities.



Follow-up data two months post retreatment weekend (2019-2022)

The most beneficial part of the weekend was reported in the following order:

- 1 Fellowship
- 2 Workshops/ Individual counseling sessions (tied)
- 3 Group counseling sessions

87% REPORTED THEY HAD DECREASED OR STOPPED GAMBLING

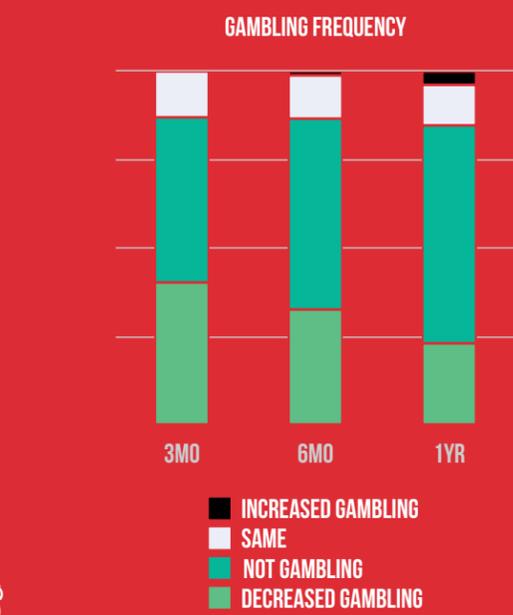
78% KEPT IN CONTACT WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS

DID THE RETREATMENT WEEKEND AID IN RECOVERY?



OUTCOMES

WVPGHN offers follow-up services to all consenting callers. Those who do not attend an appointment but request emailed or mailed resources receive a call one week after their initial call. Those who attend an appointment get a reminder call before the appointment and a follow-up after their appointment. All callers can receive follow-up calls at three months, six months, and one year from their initial call. The responses measure behavior changes from previous follow-up(s) and initial contact. The following represents 219 follow-up calls.



80%
SAID THAT THEY
HAD REDUCED THEIR
DEBT

MARKETING

Billboards are one of the most common ways callers say they learned about the WVPGHN services. This year there were 62 billboards statewide with these messages:



WVPGHN aired commercials on network, cable, and streaming television. Last year, WVPGHN created a basketball-themed ad. In FY 2023, WVPGHN created a football-themed ad, which was produced in-house.



Each year, WVPGHN participates, along with the West Virginia Lottery, in the National Council on Problem Gambling's "Gift Responsibly" program, which discourages gambling-themed gifts for children. Flyers were given out to thousands of families at outreach events.



OUTREACH & MEDIA

Community outreach plays a crucial role in the program's outreach efforts. WVPGHN staff actively engaged with 33 groups, encompassing professional conferences, civic clubs, and employee gatherings, presenting valuable information on gambling addiction. In addition, WVPGHN staff distributed informative materials at 165 community events, conferences, health fairs, schools, and various medical and social service facilities. Promotional materials were also distributed to 26 individuals and organizations.



Program Director Maricel Bernardo (center) with partners at the WV Higher Education Summit



Program Director Maricel Bernardo connecting with college students at Marshall University



Staff members Tara Booth and Errin Bayes exhibiting at the WV-National Association of Social Workers Annual Conference

Furthermore, FCS staff actively contribute to community outreach efforts, sharing WVPGHN resources during their outreach with County Quick Response Teams, the Bream Center, and the American Job Center.



Staff member Errin Bayes at the youth-focused "Try This" conference

WEST VIRGINIA NEWS

March is West Virginia's Gambling Awareness Month

by: Chris Robertson
Posted: Mar 18, 2023 / 01:04 PM EDT
Updated: Mar 18, 2023 / 01:59 PM EDT

MENTAL HEALTH

How do you know if you're addicted to gambling, and what do you do next?

by: D.K. Wright
Posted: Jan 24, 2023 / 06:27 PM EST
Updated: Jan 24, 2023 / 06:27 PM EST

WVPGHNW works to secure local media coverage of problem gambling, highlighting the program as a path to recovery.

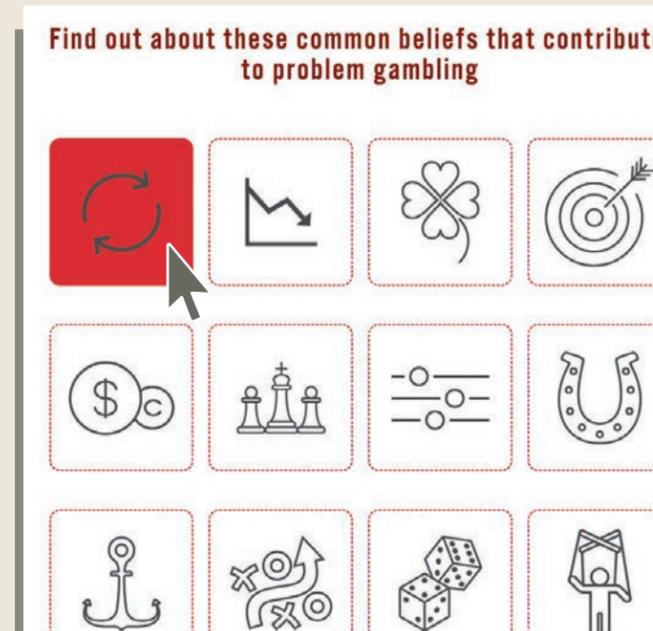
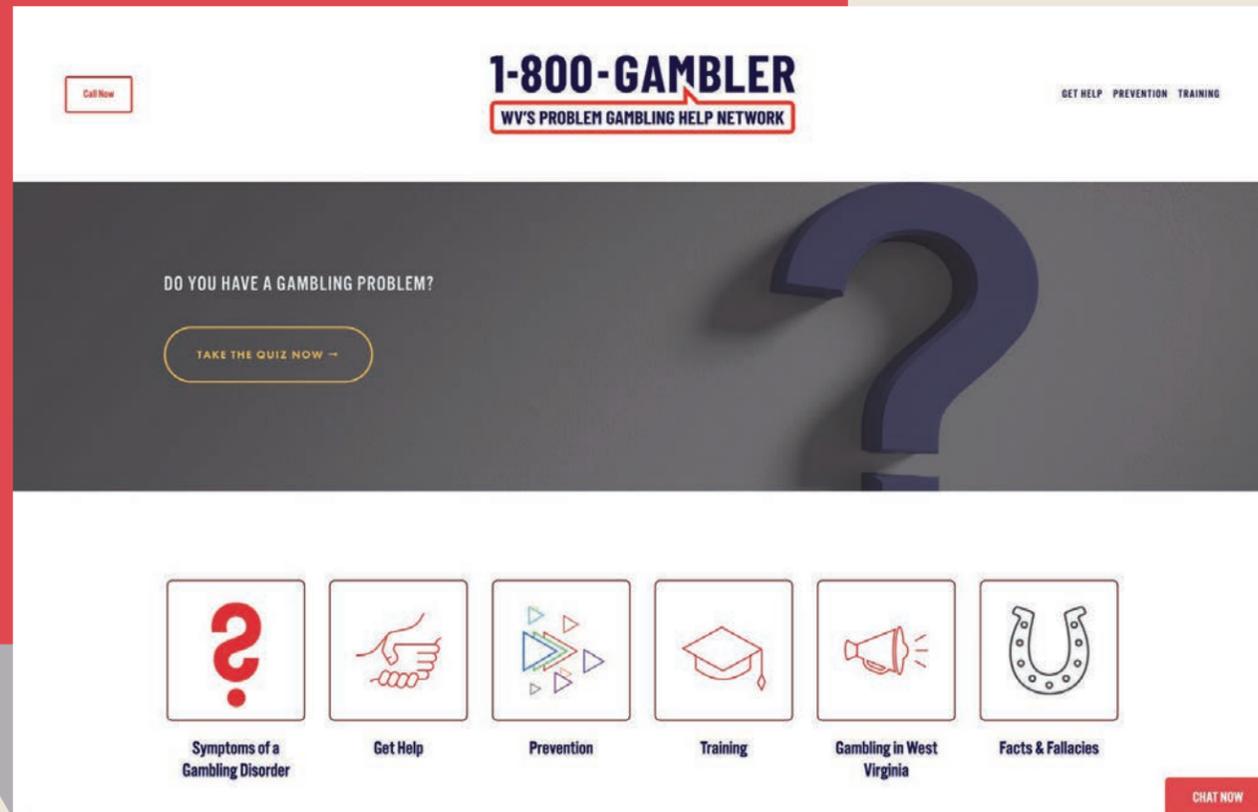
This year, WVPGHN generated 36 newspaper, radio, or television stories on gambling addiction in West Virginia



WEBSITE

The WVPGHN website, 1800GAMBLER.net, underwent a comprehensive redesign to enhance user experience. The revamped site boasts improved navigation, elevated content quality, and optimized search engine functionality. The website recorded 81,000 unique visitors this year, representing a 20% increase compared to the previous year. Website visitors have 24/7 access to online chat support. Additionally, they can explore treatment resources in their local area, take advantage of opportunities to enroll in training programs, access information on symptoms of problem gambling, learn about safer gambling practices, and dispel common gambling myths.

A noteworthy feature of the website is a 9-question interactive Gambling Disorder questionnaire. Of the 373 individuals who participated in this quiz, nearly all evaluated their symptoms and reported experiencing at least one symptom, underscoring the importance of the platform in fostering self-awareness and understanding of gambling-related concerns.



Selective Recall
Some gamblers choose to remember only the times they win, but do not acknowledge – or they “forget” – the times they lose.





WVPGHN social media reached
144,000+ people last year!



SOCIAL MEDIA

WVPGHN launched a digital ad campaign strategically targeting individuals interested in gambling. The campaign spanned streaming services, YouTube, and Facebook, tailoring content for those frequenting gambling websites, engaging with gambling-related content on Facebook, and visiting limited video lottery establishments based on geolocation data.

The outreach generated 1,410,480 impressions and attracted over 13,000 visits to the 1800GAMBLER.net website from individuals located in West Virginia.

The Problem Gambling Help Network of West Virginia
March 10 · 🌐
Thanks Regional Family Resource Network for getting these stickers placed at Putnam Provisions Company/Drip Coffee and Little Caesars. If you want stickers, message us!



The Problem Gambling Help Network of West Virginia
October 18, 2022 · 🌐
We took part in a Peer Recovery Retreat for SUD peer coaches. We were grateful to introduce them to Marshal so they could hear his story about how powerful gambling addiction is. Several peers commented that they plan to start screening clients for gambling disorder.



PREVENTION



According to NCPG, youth are significantly more likely to develop a gambling addiction than adults. Those who start gambling young are more likely to develop gambling problems. Issues contributing to an increase in youth gambling include:

- The ubiquity of sports betting ads, often with the message that gambling is risk-free.
- Accessibility to electronic gaming and gambling.
- The convergence of video/mobile gaming and gambling, including unregulated gambling features in popular video games.
- Increased popularity of financial ventures such as cryptocurrency and day trading, which have gambling elements.

WVPGHN collaborates with prevention organizations to educate and spread problem gambling awareness. WVPGHN partners with the Southern West Virginia Collegiate Peer Recovery Network to share prevention and treatment information with the campus community. According to NCPG, about 75% of college students gamble yearly, and approximately 6% have serious gambling problems. WVPGHN also works to educate younger students about the risks of gaming and gambling addiction.

Grants were awarded to the following organizations to assist with youth outreach and prevention work:

- Brooke-Hancock Family Resource Network (FRN)
- Calhoun FRN
- Reset, Inc.
- Clay FRN
- Community Connections, Inc.
- Mason County FRN
- Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues/FRN
- Regional FRN
- Taylor County FRN
- Wetzel County Center for Children and Families/FRN
- Clay County Health Department Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)

Grantees receive a full day of training on problem gambling and evidence-based practices to prevent youth gambling. WVPGHN also provides them with ongoing support throughout the year. The prevention grantees specialize in community prevention, education, and mentorship. They worked virtually and in person with youth and educated parents, community members, and other organizations about gaming/gambling addiction and prevention. Most grantees agreed that before they received the grant and training from 1-800-GAMBLER, they were unaware of the risks of youth problem gambling.



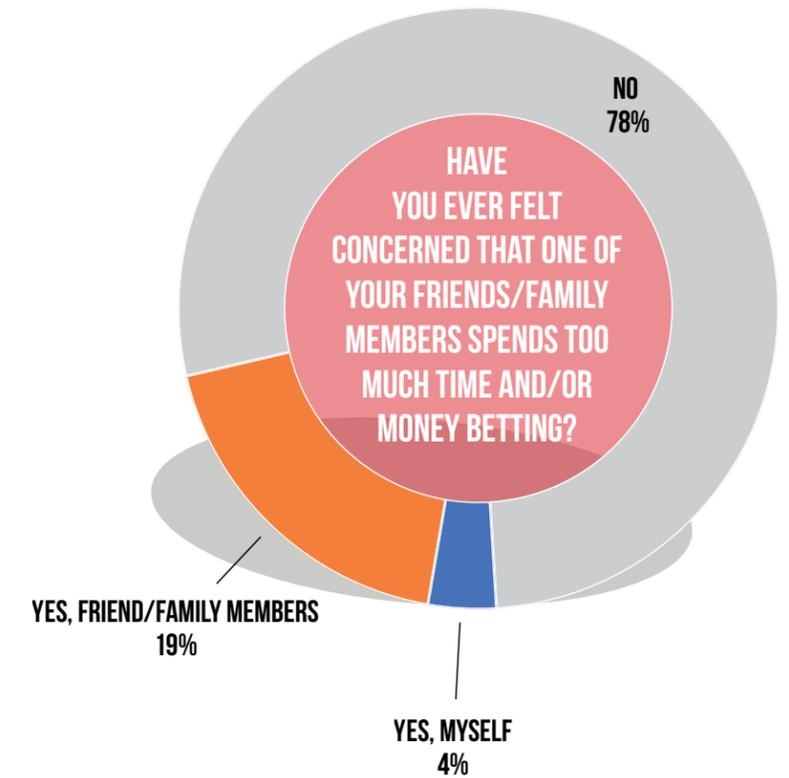
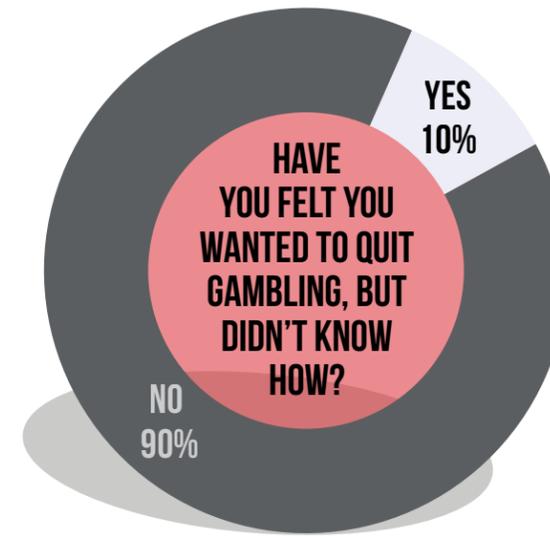
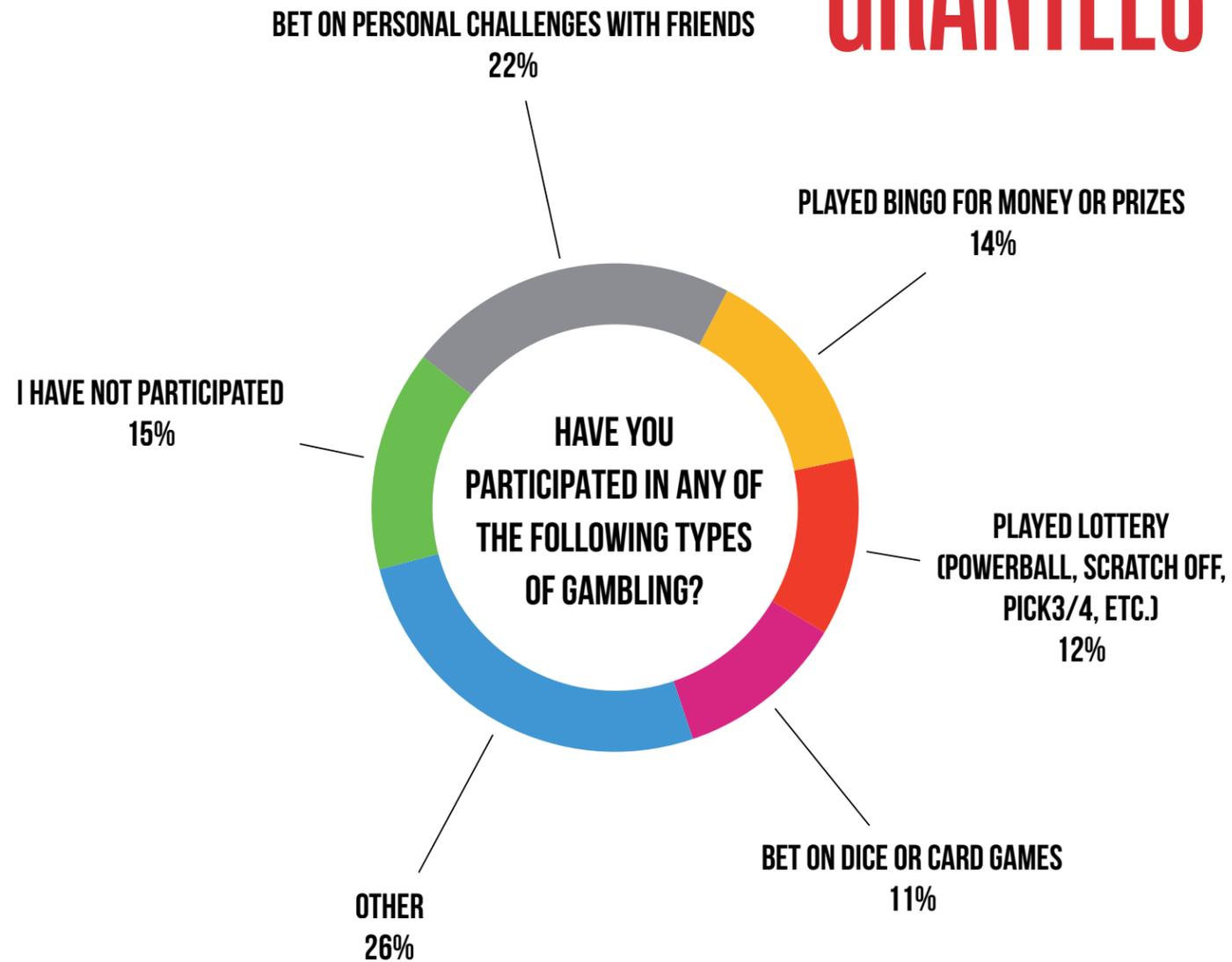
Our newest group of prevention grantees

WVPGHN prevention activities reached OVER 20,000 students and families through the following activities:

- Distribution of information and giveaways for outreach at sporting/school events, community meetings, local and state fairs, health fairs, malls, open-air markets, and various community holiday events
- Distribution of information and giveaways at local food pantries and food drives throughout the year
- Placement of information at libraries, courthouses, health departments, and public locations
- Workshops and presentations to middle, high school, and college students
- Youth surveys on gambling activities
- Teaching Stacked Deck evidence-based curriculum
- Weekly intercom announcements for one high school
- Poster and door contests
- Active youth participation in creating PSAs
- Messages on social media, radio, newspapers, and neighborhood message boards
- Youth participation in coalition meetings
- Movie night and escape room activities as alternative interests to gaming
- Community activity events for youth in partnership with local businesses
- Window displays at FRNs
- Community discussion of problem gambling throughout the year, especially during Red Ribbon Week, National Prevention Week, Problem Gambling Awareness Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, Prom Promise, and back-to-school events



RESULTS FROM YOUTH SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY PREVENTION GRANTEES



27

students said, "I have spent too much money online on apps/in-apps purchases/ loot boxes/mystery boxes, etc."

86

students said, "I have tried to cut down how much screen time I use."



89

students said, "I think I spend too much time online/playing games/using screen time."



NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH

Each year, WVPGHN participates in National Problem Gambling Awareness Month in March. This month is an opportunity to bring attention to an often under-recognized and stigmatized disorder that affects millions of Americans. In FY 2023, WVPGHN presented seminars on gambling disorders, issued press releases, participated in media interviews, and secured city and statewide declarations acknowledging the harms of problem gambling.



NPGAM-themed cookies that helped attract conference attendees to WVPGHN booths in March



Program Director Maricel Bernardo with Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin recognizing Problem Gambling Awareness Month



WVPGHN staff with Governor Justice's declaration recognizing Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Mountain State Summit on Gambling Addiction

Join us **MARCH 21ST**
at **THE COTTAGE AT NORTHGATE**
400 Patterson Lane
Northgate Business Park
Charleston, WV



EARN UP TO 6.25 CEU'S
Earn CEU's for Addictions, SW, Nursing, & LPC
Event is free, lunch included

SPACE IS LIMITED – REGISTER SOON!
Register at <https://hipaa.jotform.com/230193100511134>
Contact twoods@firstchoiceservices.org for questions




WVPGHN offered free informational sessions to the public during National Problem Gambling Awareness Month

TRAINING

WVPGHN staff presented information in person or through virtual webinars to 33 organizations. Presentations and training were offered to professional associations, reentry councils, schools, student groups, colleges, family resource centers, community collaboratives, and the West Virginia Department of Human Services (DoHS), formerly a part of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), county offices. In addition, WVPGHN offered a four-part training series on problem gambling through the Marshall University Training Center.

WVPGHN offered exclusive training to the 50+ network clinicians who treat 1-800-GAMBLER callers. The clinicians also received clinical consultation training and advanced training specific to trending types of gambling, such as mobile day trading, cryptocurrency, and meme stocks.

As the lines between gaming and gambling have blurred and the comorbidity between these disorders has increased, clinicians must have current treatment knowledge and employ best practice techniques most closely suited to their client's experience.

In FY 2023, WVPGHN held a two day advanced counselor training in Charleston and opened a third day of training, titled "Mountain State Summit on Gambling Addiction," to the public. There were 32 attendees.

Eleven network clinicians and staff are certified as Internationally Certified Gambling Counselors (ICGC), and three are studying to obtain certification. Dr. Heather Chapman, Director of the Louis Stokes Cleveland Veterans Administration Medical Center Gambling Addiction Treatment program, continues to act as WVPGHN clinical consultant.

WVPGHN offered Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to psychologists, social workers, counselors, nurses, and addiction professionals. In FY 2023, WVPGHN offered 50.75 CEU hours to nearly 400 clinicians. WVPGHN is a preferred provider for the International Gambling Counselor Certification



Counselors and staff at the advanced training

This year, WVPGHN partnered with GamFin, a company that provides financial training and financial counseling services for those experiencing problem gambling. This enabled WVPGHN network clinicians to help 1800-GAMBLER callers develop financial solutions to aid in the treatment and recovery process.



Staff and counselors attended the National Conference on Problem Gambling in July

COMMENTS FROM WVPGHN HELPLINE CALLER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

"Kriston was absolutely amazing! She made me feel like there is an end to this gambling addiction."

"Tara is a wonderful asset and a friendly, kind, knowledgeable, nice, caring person. Made entire interaction tolerable and no feelings of embarrassment or stress whatsoever!"

"Kriston was very professional and extremely helpful! It's important for people with an addiction to be able to call and speak with someone as helpful as she was for me."

"I would not have been able to start this without her."

"She was very supportive and kind. Took the time to listen and was very supportive. Helped me have a better understanding of gambling addiction and helped me get my loved on started in the right direction for getting help."

"Heather was very kind and caring and listened to every detail and made me have hope again. She is a true blessing."

"I was very comfortable about a very serious, personal and embarrassing situation. I appreciate having this channel of help. Thank you."

"Sam was so amazing and made me feel so glad to have reached out."

"She 100% saved my life. I was in bad shape, and she provided the tools I needed to shut down the websites etc. through Gamban. Everyone that has called has been amazing. I was beyond scared and what you all do makes a HUGE difference. I was so alone, and I am so grateful for you all."

"I was amazed by the immediate attention and varied resources which were described by the helpline specialist who took my call. They were sent to me by email soon after my call. I was also able to connect with multiple leaders in the recovery effort. A follow up phone call and this email seeking feedback rounded out the experience in a highly responsive and supportive way. As a family member of an individual who has experienced the volatility which often accompanies a gambling addiction, and as a Peer Recovery Specialist, I found these services far exceeded my expectations. Thank you."

FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME:

WVPGHN Contract	1,432,450.03
Other Income	45,430.00
Total Income:	1,477,880.03

EXPENSE:

Payroll	543,494.16
Marketing/Media/Outreach	173,063.03
Direct Program Expense	72,296.62
Treatment Services - Direct	100,316.21
Treatment Services - Admin	2,610.02
Insurance Expense	201.21
Communication	13,482.21
Equipment	8,790.68
Contracting Expense	4,495.29
Supplies	3,566.79
Travel	2,777.20
Rent	11,438.61
Training	46,333.82
Administrative Costs	187,025.81
Total Expense	1,169,891.66
Net Income	307,988.37

STAFF

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Maricel Bernardo, MSM-HCA, Program Director

Sheila Moran, MSW, LSW, ICGC, Director of Marketing

Adam Sypolt, Media Coordinator

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Kriston Vanhorn, Helpline Coordinator

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Shane Gatrell, Helpline Coordinator

Aaron Floyd, Helpline Coordinator

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