



Pennsylvania
Department of Drug and
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Shapiro Administration Kicks off Problem Gambling Awareness Month to Highlight Resources, Help is Available



Pennsylvanians struggling from problem gambling can call (1-800-GAMBLER), text or chat with professionals and get help right from their own home – it is free, confidential and available 24/7.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the **Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Secretary Dr. Latika Davis-Jones** joined the **Pennsylvania Lottery**, the **Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB)**, the **Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania (CCGP)**, and an individual in long-term recovery from problem gambling to kick off March as National Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM).

This year marks the 22nd anniversary of PGAM, with the yearly designation is designed to increase public awareness of the availability of treatment and recovery services and encourage health care providers to screen their service recipients for problem gambling.

“I encourage all Pennsylvanians to learn about the signs of problem gambling and to use that knowledge to help spread the message that treatment and resources are available. Knowledge is power, especially in terms of prevention,” said **Secretary Davis-Jones**. “With the right treatment and supports for problem gambling, recovery is not only possible, but also probable. Understanding that treatment and resources are available to help is often the first step on the road to recovery.”

Pennsylvania operates numerous resources to support individuals suffering from problem gambling including a Problem Gambling Helpline available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year at 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537), as well as a 24-hour chat service available through [CCGP](#).

“While most people won’t experience problems with gambling, some will,” said **CCGP Executive Director Josh Ercole**. “Being aware of possible warning signs and knowing where to turn for assistance in Pennsylvania is vital.”

“The Pennsylvania Lottery is proud to help fund the helpline, 1-800-GAMBLER, and of the work we are doing with our partners to promote responsible play and support people who may be suffering from gambling-related harms,” said **Pennsylvania Lottery Executive Director Drew Svitko**. “Our mission is to generate funds for older Pennsylvanians in a socially responsible way, while ensuring players across the Commonwealth have the tools and resources they need to engage in healthy lottery play.”

Gambling, even through legal avenues, becomes a problem when individuals begin to develop strained relationships with loved ones; borrow money to gamble; gamble to experience a high or feeling; or miss work, school, or other activities and obligations in order to gamble. These behaviors can have a serious impact on a person’s financial, physical, and mental health. Other symptoms of problem gambling include trying to hide or lying about gambling, using gambling as an escape to avoid dealing with other problems, and feeling like the habit is out of control but being unable to stop.

At the press conference, **David Yeager, a Pennsylvanian in long-term recovery from problem gambling**, spoke about his struggles. Yeager, who is also a veteran, uses his lived experience to help raise awareness about problem gambling among military service members and veterans and link them to supports and services.

“While not all of us are impacted by problem gambling, those of us who are often don’t realize it’s a treatable addiction until severe damage is done,” said **Yeager**. “Much more education and awareness are needed to help those struggling realize there’s help available.”

Penn State University, in conjunction with DDAP and the PGCB, conducts an [annual assessment of the impacts of interactive gaming](#), also referred to as online gambling or iGaming, in Pennsylvania. [The report](#) is designed to establish the prevalence of online gambling, examine the demographic characteristics of adult Pennsylvania online gamblers, and identify the characteristics associated with experiencing problems with online gambling. The key findings of the 2024 report indicate:

- Nearly two-thirds of adult Pennsylvanians engaged in some form of online gambling last year;
- The most popular form of online gaming is sports betting; and
- Those who engage in both in-person and online gambling have the highest risk of problem gambling, while those who only gamble in person had the lowest risk.

“During PGAM, it is vital that we share information about the resources available to all Pennsylvanians who find that gambling is causing a negative impact on their lives. Online prevention tools, responsible gaming initiatives, in-person and telehealth treatment, and self-exclusion programs are resources that can help individuals with gambling disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery,” said **Elizabeth Lanza, Director of the Office of Compulsive and Problem Gambling for the PGCB.**

More information on the PGCB’s [self-exclusion programs](#), along with ways to identify a gambling problem within an individual, can be found through the agency’s [website](#) that is specific to its efforts in compulsive and problem gaming.

For more information on the Shapiro Administration’s problem gambling resources, visit ddap.pa.gov.

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