

New Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health Aims to Strengthen Treatment Services for Problem Gamblers

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[/EINPresswire.com/](#) -- The Virginia Council on Problem Gambling ([VCPG](#)) announces the formation of the Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health, a consortium of stakeholders committed to strengthen treatment services for individuals who need support for problem gambling. Members of the new partnership include VCPG, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services ([VDBHDS](#)), the [Virginia Lottery](#) and the VCU Department of Rehabilitation Counseling/College of Health Professionals.



VCPG Logo

“The Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health is designed to create a more robust treatment infrastructure for those experiencing problem gaming and gambling,” said Dr. Carolyn Hawley, Ph.D., President of VCPG. “It will significantly extend and elevate the level of treatment support currently offered by the 24/7 helpline.”



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*Dr. Carolyn Hawley, President,
Virginia Council on Problem
Gambling*

VCPG operates a toll-free confidential helpline, 1-888-532-3500, that is funded by the Virginia Lottery. The helpline is available to all Virginia residents 24/7 via phone, text or online chat. In 2021, callers seeking help for their own or a loved one’s gambling problems increased by 114% from 2020.

Under the current system, a caller’s service needs would be evaluated by the helpline operator who can then refer the caller to a network treatment provider upon completion of screening. Some limited follow-up services are available.

The Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health will be able to centralize treatment services for individuals and families in need of therapeutic support. Based on results of the initial screening from a call to the helpline, eligible individuals will be offered the opportunity to work with a peer recovery specialist in their specific health region of Virginia.

Individuals in need of more intensive therapeutic services will be referred to one of the partnership's contracted treatment providers for assessment which could be followed by outpatient counseling sessions. Enhanced follow-up services include continued sessions with peer recovery experts and/or local Gamblers Anonymous meetings.

The overall aims of the Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health, which is funded by VDBHDS, are to:

- *Develop and sustain a treatment provider network within local communities
- *Provide timely reimbursement for a continuum of care
- *Increase access and utilization of treatment supports
- *Provide gaming and gambling continuing education and training on evidence-based practices for providers

Problem gambling is defined as all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. Approximately two million U.S. adults (1% of the population) are estimated to meet the criteria for severe problem gambling. Another four to six million meet the criteria for mild or moderate problem gambling.

"Since the Virginia Lottery's inception in 1988, we have been dedicated to raising awareness about resources for those seeking help for gambling addiction," said Virginia Lottery Acting Executive Director Kelly T. Gee. "Our long-standing alliance with VCPG, including funding the helpline, demonstrates our commitment to ensure players who may need help know where to find it. The Virginia Lottery's role in this partnership is to support awareness of the clinicians who will provide valuable treatment options in the Commonwealth."

"Unlike substance and alcohol use, gambling is considered a hidden addiction with consequences that can be just as devastating," concluded Dr. Hawley. "Thanks to funding from the VDBHDS and the Virginia Lottery, as well as professional expertise from the VCU Department of Rehabilitation Counseling/College of Health Professionals, a forward-thinking approach to increased support is now available across the Commonwealth. The Virginia Partnership for Gaming and Health is committed to providing accessible and inclusive patient-centered care, treatment and support for problem gamblers and their families."

VCPG aims to increase public awareness of problem gambling, ensure the widespread availability of treatment and support for problem gamblers and their families, and to encourage research and programs for prevention and education. VCPG maintains a neutral stance on gambling. If

you or someone you know has a gambling problem, please call or text 1-888-532-3500 or visit vcpg.net to chat online.

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