

## Treatment Options for the WV Problem Gambler

Locking the outside doors at night may not protect you from theft if your loved one inside has a serious gambling problem. Piggy banks aren't safe. Wallets and purses are fair game. Unexplained extended lines of credit and maxed credit cards are the norm as bills become delinquent. After all, your loved one is sure that if he or she just makes one more bet they will be able to repay all of the money they have "borrowed." Somehow they allow themselves to believe that it is not really stealing if they plan to repay it from their so-called wins. Your loved one only wanted to have fun. They didn't expect to become one of the six to nine million Americans with this addiction.

Nearly everyone around a Problem Gambler has their life impacted in some way by their addicted family member or friend. This person constantly tries to borrow money to cover losses or unpaid household bills. They miss many family events or seem very distracted if they are in attendance. There are many family arguments about money. Lies are quite common. Problem gamblers sometimes even find themselves kicked out of college, fired at work, or facing legal problems.

Unfortunately, the gambler's loved ones also will suffer. The kitchen cupboards may be nearly bare and the phone will be ringing off the hook with calls from creditors. There isn't even gas money to get to work. Any "extra" cash is gulped down by the gambler's addiction. Loved ones frequently work extra hard to cover the financial messes, but it takes a toll on them as well.

Gambling can take on any form. Some are addicted to Bingo and Scratch offs. Others play the Powerball and dream of winning big. The local Hot Spot Cafes are the choice for some. Still others are addicted to games at the Casinos, and Races at the Dog and Horse Tracks.

In West Virginia help is available for both the gambler and those individuals close to him or her. There are counselors in nearly every WV County. Those in the gambler's support system can begin treatment even without the gambler's consent. They must learn how to help the addict while protecting their own sanity and financial assets until the gambler is willing to get help. There is only a \$5 per session charge for counseling if the individuals do not have insurance or Pathological Gambling Services are not covered. Gamblers and their loved ones may participate in Pathological Gambler Counseling Services even if they are being treated by another mental health professional for something else.

In addition to individual counseling, the 1-800 GAMBLER help network of WV offers resources at [www.1800gambler.net](http://www.1800gambler.net), intensive outpatient programs, on-line chats, treatment weekends, and referrals to Gamblers Anonymous. There are currently two GA meetings in Wheeling weekly as well as meetings in Washington, Pa and Steubenville, OH. There are even on-line meetings. With so many options available there is really no excuse for not getting help.

The next therapeutic ReTREATment weekend is scheduled for September 20-22, 2013, at the John XXIII Pastoral Center, Charleston, WV. This special weekend is free to the gambler plus one optional support person. Meals, lodging, and workshops will be included. There will be an opportunity to meet with nationally known problem gambling treatment professionals. Previous attendees at this retreat have found the fellowship and training to be very helpful. Gamblers or their loved ones may call 1-800 GAMBLER to schedule counseling or to reserve a slot at the retreat.