

NEWS from the N.D. Department of Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Problem Gambling Awareness Week is March 4-10 **North Dakotans are reminded that gambling treatment and prevention resources are available**

Bismarck, N.D. – In the United States, 6 million adults and 500,000 teens meet criteria for gambling addiction, yet only a small fraction seek out services such as treatment and self-help recovery programs. The annual social cost of gambling-related addiction, bankruptcy, and crime equals \$7 billion.

During **National Problem Gambling Awareness Week March 4-10**, the North Dakota Department of Human Services reminds residents they can seek help through Gamblers Choice, a Lutheran Social Services program that the department helps fund. Gamblers Choice is an outpatient treatment program for problem gamblers and family members affected by gambling behaviors. Group and individual counseling is available, along with education and support for family members. Educational information is also available for schools, churches, civic groups, and mental health professionals.

Gamblers Choice treatment and support services are available in Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot, and Williston. A private provider serves Devils Lake. Details are online at www.lssnd.org/gamblerschoice/index.html or by calling 1-877-702-7848.

Individuals can also call the 2-1-1 Helpline (2-1-1 or 701-235-7335) to be connected to counselors and support group meetings. The Helpline is a program through FirstLink, a private, nonprofit human service agency.

“Gambling addiction is misunderstood,” said Lisa Vig, Lutheran Social Services program director. “Although many gamblers are first motivated by experiencing winning of money, addiction is really about doing something in an effort to change feelings and escape difficult and uncomfortable life experiences.”

Vig added most people who are problem gamblers describe positive euphoric feelings while gambling or numbness and ‘zoning out’. Gambling addiction is not about the money.

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The theme this year is “Anyone. Anywhere. Anytime.” Anyone can have a gambling problem: any age, gender, ethnicity, income status, education status, or occupation.

The Prevention Resource and Media Center of the North Dakota Department of Human Services’ Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has free informational materials available on problem gambling prevention. These include brochures, DVDs, and a curriculum.

“During this awareness week, our agencies hope to educate people about gambling addiction and to raise awareness that help is available,” said Don Wright, assistant division director.

For more information, contact the Prevention Resource and Media Center at 701-328-8919, toll-free 800-642-6744, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or visit the Web site www.nd.gov/dhs/prevention.

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