

Help Line Assists Callers In Seeking Counseling

Problem gamblers and their family members can now make an appointment to visit a counselor through Missouri's help line service – Life Crisis Services. By calling the toll-free problem-gambling help line – 1-888-BETSOFF – callers may be able to set up an appointment with a certified compulsive gambling counselor without having to make a second call.

“We want to increase the likelihood of the caller getting into services,” said Sue Self, vice president of Telephonic Counseling and program manager for the problem gambling help line. “Often times, the caller just doesn't make that second call to set up an appointment for counseling. We're hoping that doing it during their initial call for help might encourage them to keep the appointment.”

Self said West Virginia has a similar program that has proven to be successful, and she's hoping that, through the new help line service, more individuals in Missouri seek counseling, too.

“Getting counselors to sign up to provide appointment times is going to be key,” Self said. “We will be as flexible as possible.”

Self said counselors participating in the Life Crisis appointment program can provide a few hours a week for Life Crisis counselors to fill with callers from the help line. If some or all of those appointment times are filled by the counselor, the counselor just needs to notify Life Crisis. If an appointment time becomes available, the counselor is asked to notify Life Crisis about the available time, as well.

According to Self, when a caller contacts the help line, an appointment for counseling services will be offered if a participating counselor is available in the caller's area. If the caller accepts the appointment, the counselor will be provided with the appointment time and contact information. No appointments will be scheduled less than 24 hours prior to the appointment time.

Self said after a scheduled appointment, a help line staff member will contact the participating counselor within a week to verify the caller attended the counseling session. The follow-up call and information obtained from the counselors will help determine the effectiveness of the program and any changes or improvements that could be made.

“We're committed to making this work,” Self said. “Counselors want more clients, and more problem gamblers need the guidance and assistance that only certified compulsive gambling counselors can provide.”

“By setting the appointment with a counselor before the caller ever gets off the phone, we believe more individuals will follow through and get the help they need,” she said.

For more information about this program or to sign up to participate, contact Self at (314) 446-2831 or call the problem gambling help line at 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633).



E-mail Now Available To Problem Gambling Help Line

Contacting Missouri's problem gambling help line just got easier. Calling the problem gambling help line – 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633) – lets callers speak to trained counselors, and now those counselors are available through e-mail.

“The same services callers get by calling the help line are now available through e-mail,” said Sue Self, help line program manager at Life Crisis Services, a St. Louis-based suicide prevention and crisis intervention hot line service. “Our counselors are able to provide counseling referrals and information about the various programs available to problem gamblers and their family members.”

Self said she believes they may be able to reach out to even more people through e-mail.

“Sometimes it's easier for people to communicate by e-mail than by making a phone call,” she said. “They may feel it's more private, or they find it easier to write about their problems than to talk about them. Either way they reach us though, we can provide them with the guidance and tools they need.”

To reach Missouri's problem gambling help line by e-mail, write to gamblingcounselor@lifecrisis.org. There is also a direct link to the e-mail address on the front page of www.888betsoff.org, the Web site for the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling.

Keeping Up With The Neighbors

Ordinarily “Keeping Up with the Neighbors” is a phrase that is interpreted as a wrong reason for doing things. However, as a neighborhood association president for the last 15 years, it has been my experience that keeping up with the neighbors can be a great way to keep a neighborhood striving not only to look good, but be the best it can be, as well. In our Missouri problem gambling neighborhood, I believe we should also consider whether we are keeping up with our neighbors when it comes to addressing problem and compulsive gambling education, prevention, treatment and research.

I have been, for some time, very impressed with the level of programming, research, public education and treatment alternatives in our neighbor Canada. I have at times resigned myself to the fact that Canada is Canada and the United States is the United States, and we were probably never going to even try to keep up with them. Then our neighbors in Kansas passed legislation for state-run gambling venues and a level of potential funding for problem gambling education, prevention, treatment and research that makes me consider moving back to the state I was reared in. For this I am grateful, since Kansas is much warmer than Canada. It remains to be seen just how this will work operationally and what enviable activity and services will come into being. Consequently, I have not yet put my home up for sale. However, I do believe we should be watching carefully and recognize now the very real challenge of improving services to Missouri citizens with the same or similar levels of care as what is expected to be provided in our neighboring state.

It certainly is inevitable that we will be adjusting our gaming laws in Missouri in one way or another

to level the field of competition to our west. As the outgoing chair of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling and one of the conference co-chairs of the National Council on Problem Gambling Conference in Kansas City, I believe gaming regulators, gaming providers, educators, prevention and treatment staff, as well as researchers – not to mention advocates and community citizens – should all be united in ensuring that we are “keeping up with the neighbors.” The level of funding directed toward educating the public and providing appropriate public health model interventions to all levels of problem gambling should be increased to meet both the level of need and the current national and international standards.

Some might say, “You are asking too much.” My response is that it is our responsibility to not only ask for what is needed, but to accept the fact that what was our state-of-the-art house may need a new coat of paint or a new roof. Our neighbors are inviting us, by their actions, to look around and consider major renovations. The consequence of not doing so, may be one that some can live with. However, it has been my experiences that as our neighbors continue to rise to the challenge, those of us who don’t start to look bad. I, for one, would rather see Missouri continue to lead. I have been and am proud that Missouri has been a cutting-edge leader in addressing problem gambling. The challenge today is, will we be a leader tomorrow?



Keith Spare

*Chair, Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling
Chair, Missouri Council on Problem Gambling Concerns*

Got A Story Idea?

Do you have a story idea for the next *Betsoff Bulletin*, or would you like to write a story for the next issue? There's a lot going on in Missouri concerning problem gambling, and we would like to include as much as possible in the *Bulletin* and on our Web site, so please be sure to pass on any ideas you may have.

To suggest story ideas for the *Bulletin* or the Web site, contact the editor, Shelly Perez, at betsoff@molottery.com, or call (573) 526-7467.

Mark Your Calendars Now

The 2008 Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse is scheduled for Aug. 13-15 in St. Louis.

Upcoming news about the conference, including a call for papers, will be posted on the Alliance's Web site – 888betsoff.org – as it becomes available.

Make plans to attend this fifth annual conference.



National Conference Is Biggest Ever

A record number of conference attendees took part in the 2007 National Conference on Problem Gambling. More than 500 people attended the 21st Annual Conference on Problem Gambling, Prevention, Research, Recovery and Treatment, which was held June 8-10 at the Marriott Downtown in Kansas City.

“We were very pleased with the turnout and the responses that we received from the conference participants,” said Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling. “We had a great variety of presenters for both gambling and substance abuse, and we were able to have some very timely panel discussions.”

Panel discussions included: “Casino Gambling Comes to Kansas: Politics, Profits and Problem Gambling,” “God, Gambling, Law and Treatment: Unique Perspectives from Recovery” and “The Two Addictions of the New Millennium: The Impact of Technology on Problem Gambling and Sexual Compulsivity.”

The 2008 National Conference on Problem Gambling will be June 26-28, 2008, in Long Beach, Calif. For more information about the 2008 conference or other National Council programs, visit the newly redesigned National Council Web site at www.ncpgambling.org.



Conference attendees participate in a general session at the 2007 National Conference in Kansas City.

Basic Gambling Counselor Training To Be Held

A 60-hour training program, which will meet the requirements for Missouri Compulsive Gambling Certification and the National Council on Problem Gambling Counselor Certification, is being sponsored by the Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse this fall.

Missouri gambling counselors must be certified as a substance abuse counselor (CSAC I, CSAC II or CASAC) or licensure as a psychologist, social worker or counselor.

Nationally renowned trainer Joanna Franklin, director of Training and Network Development for Trimeridian Inc. – Resources for Problem Gambling, will provide the 60-hour training during the four training sessions. The dates of the training are as follows:

- Sept. 27-28
- Oct. 10-11
- Nov. 5-6
- Dec. 4-5

Training participants must attend all sessions to meet certification requirements. For information about counselor certification, training or treatment services, contact Nora Bock with the Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse by calling (573) 751-8104.

Alliance Representative To Attend Forum On Self-exclusion

A representative of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling has been invited to participate in a two-day forum on self-exclusion sponsored by the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) this fall in Toronto. Melissa Stephens, the problem gambling program administrator for the Missouri Gaming Commission, will be attending the forum along with representatives from Canada, the United States, Europe, Australia and South Africa.

The RGC forum is the fourth and final element of an ongoing self-exclusion study being conducted by the non-profit organization, and it is expected to help the RGC establish guidelines for self-exclusion policies and management that follow the principles of best practices.

“Research on self-exclusion is still relatively rare; research on the best practices in self-exclusion is nearly non-existent, and I am delighted to be part of this outstanding research initiative,” Stephens said. “This will be an excellent opportunity to network face-to-face with some of the best and brightest in the field of self-exclusion. I look forward to sharing perspectives with them on self-exclusion management and processes and to identify potential enhancements to help make Missouri’s program even better.”

During the forum, the RGC is expected to present its findings from the other three elements of this self-exclusion study.

The forum will include panel discussions on research and individuals who have signed self-exclusion agreements, small group discussions and a plenary session. The findings are anticipated to be released in 2008.



Melissa Stephens

1-888-BETSOFF

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Awareness Materials Available Through Web Site

A variety of problem gambling awareness materials are available for free through the Missouri Alliance, including posters and brochures from the latest Alliance awareness campaign, "Hope for You and Yours."



Visit the Alliance's Web site for more information about items available to order for your business, school or office. All items available through the Alliance are free to Missouri residents and businesses.

Need A Speaker?

The Alliance provides speakers for groups and organizations throughout the state. For more information about the speakers bureau or to arrange a presentation, please call (573) 526-7467 or (573) 526-4080.

All presentations are free of charge.

Want To Receive The Bulletin?

In an attempt to streamline costs, the *Betsoff Bulletin* is available through the Alliance's Web site, www.888betsoff.org. We have an e-mail list of individuals who are interested in receiving notification when a new issue is available at the Web site, so please forward your e-mail address to betsoff@molottery.com. If you would prefer to receive a free printed copy of the *Bulletin* through the regular mail service, please let us know by calling (573) 526-7467.

If you received notification by e-mail about this issue, you're already on our e-mail list, but remember to send us updates on any e-mail address changes. In addition, please feel free to forward the link for the newsletter to anyone else who may be interested in reading it.

Thank you for your interest in the *Bulletin*.

Alliance news and event schedules are available on the Web at:

www.888betsoff.org



The Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling's mission is to heighten public awareness for the dangers of problem gambling; develop prevention and education programs for gamblers of all ages; and direct problem gamblers and their families to the 1-888-BETSOFF help line and treatment.