

Gambling Court - A Novel Idea That Works In New York

Gambling Court? It may be a new idea to Missouri, but since 2001, Judge Mark G. Farrell has been holding such a court in Amherst, N.Y.

Based on the premise of Drug Court, which is currently held in most Missouri counties, Gambling Court is a treatment-based alternative to prison. The program, like Drug Court, encourages the criminal justice system to work with various types of treatment providers to provide an offender with all the tools necessary to get into recovery, stay in recovery and to become a law-abiding citizen.

"These are not usually career criminals, but individuals locked into the depths of their addiction, which is being ignored," Farrell said during a training session in Des Moines, Iowa, sponsored by the Iowa Substance Abuse Program Director's Association. "We buy into drug addiction as an addiction, but gambling is perceived as a character flaw."

According to Farrell, the traditional criminal justice system offers little if any treatment for problem gambling, which leads to a probable return to gambling or criminal activity when the offender is released.

The most common crimes committed by problem gamblers include: fraud, bouncing checks, theft from employer (money, services, goods and lottery tickets), stealing, bookmaking, theft from family, child neglect, shoplifting and falsely reporting crimes, according to Farrell.

Farrell said Gambling Court follows a lot of the same practices as Drug Court.

A defendant must first plead guilty and waive all constitutional rights, including the right to plea-bargain. Successful completion of the program could reduce a defendant's charge

and sentencing.

But, according to Farrell, there are consequences for violating the terms of the Gambling Court agreement. Missed therapy sessions can result in fines or jail time. Missed court appearances, lying, relapsing or violating other terms of the Gambling Court contract can result in the offender being returned to the regular criminal court system.

Participants in the Gambling Court program are required to maintain abstinence of drugs, alcohol and gambling. Random drug testing is frequently performed on the offenders.

Farrell said if an offender has comorbid or co-existing addictions, the offender is referred to the Drug Court system first before beginning the Gambling Court program.

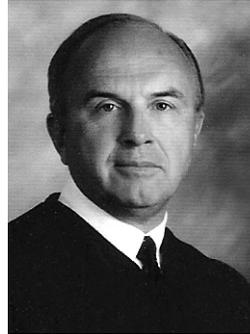
If family members of a Gambling Court participant attempt to bail their loved one out of jail, the standard bail of \$5,000 is raised to \$10,000.

"Being in the program is an opportunity, not a punishment," Farrell said. "It's a therapeutic system that is based on sanctions and rewards."

While Farrell does impose sanctions on the defendant when rules are violated, he also is quick to reward individuals for compliance. Rewards could include public encouragement and praise from the bench, reduced supervision, decreased frequency of court appearances and eventually graduation from Gambling Court, which leads to reduced or suspended jail time and reduced fines or fees.

Farrell said that he imposes the costs of the screenings and treatment on the defendant.

"Getting the attention of the court system and other government officials is the first step to setting up a Gambling Court," Farrell said. "Pathological gambling impacts families and society, and it's time that government officials and society begin to recognize it as an addiction."



Judge Mark G. Farrell

Parkinson's Treatment A Link To Gambling Addiction?

Problem gambling may be a side affect of the drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease. A 2003 study in Arizona, which included more than 1,800 Parkinson's patients, and recent Canadian research have indicated a possible link between a drug used to treat the symptoms of the disease and a sudden increase in gambling.

Lia Nower, an assistant professor of Social Welfare at the University of Missouri- St. Louis and a state- and nationally-certified compulsive gambling counselor, has conducted research, both nationally and internationally, on problem gambling.

She explains that brain research is in its infancy, and most theories about how the brain works are just that - theories - with limited science behind them.

"However, we do know that many disorders share common neurobiological and genetic

pathways," she said. "For example, Parkinsonian symptoms result when the motor center of the brain, the basal ganglia, is deprived of dopamine, a brain chemical essential for the regulation of many functions including mood.

"In contrast, too much dopamine is present in the mesolimbic system or 'pleasure pathway' of the brains of individuals with schizophrenia," she continued. "That's why typical antipsychotic medications that control hallucinations and delusions by blocking dopamine receptors in the brain cause the symptoms of Parkinson's disease in schizophrenics."

Nower said there are two possible explanations why individuals with Parkinson's disease report increased rates of gambling.

"First, genetic researchers have suggested that certain individuals have anomalies in a dopamine allele in the pleasure pathway of the

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General Assembly Likely To Consider Problem Gambling Issues

Missouri's status as a leader in developing innovative and effective methods of treating and preventing problem gambling may get a boost from new legislation this year. There are early indications that the Missouri Legislature will consider doubling the amount that may be appropriated for problem gambling programs. The legislation would raise the amount that may be appropriated from the state's portion of the dollar casino admission by one cent, doubling the amount of the current cap of one cent.

In addition, the Missouri Gaming Commission staff has received positive feedback from legislators regarding the Commission's suggestion that jackpot proceeds from problem gamblers who have voluntarily excluded themselves be transferred to the Compulsive Gamblers Fund. Currently, if an excluded person wins a jackpot, the casino retains the money. Since a casino operator's business model anticipates paying out jackpot winnings, it seems an unjust enrichment to allow the company to retain the funds. Paying the jackpot winnings into the Compulsive Gamblers Fund will provide resources to treat problem gamblers and help prevent the occurrence of problem gambling.

Both of these initiatives will greatly strengthen our efforts to assist problem gamblers and augment our prevention programs. We must attack this problem on multiple fronts, and prevention is every bit as important as treatment. As Keith Whyte, who is the executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling, frequently says, "You cannot make advances in the battle against any disease by treating only the casualties."

It appears the Legislature will also consider placing restrictions on the future expansion of gambling. We can expect to see bills placing limitations on the number of slot machines and on the number of casinos the Gaming Commission may license.

Parkinson's Link

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brain that make them more likely to crave increased levels of dopamine," she said. "Substances like cocaine and behaviors like gambling can raise those levels and generate a 'high' or heightened sense of well-being.

"Second, medications to treat Parkinson's disease are designed to increase the supply of dopamine in the brain, stimulating the pleasure pathway and causing increased cravings for activities and substances that maintain those higher levels over time."

Nower said making Parkinson disease patients and their family members aware of this link is important to help alleviate the chances of a gambling problem developing.

She said research has also indicated that lowering the drug dosage or providing an alternative drug often can help the patient overcome a gambling addiction.

Problem Gambling Week Heightens Awareness

Missouri's problem gambling organization is joining in the first National Problem Gambling Awareness Week scheduled from March 6-12. Members of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling will be participating in a variety of activities to raise awareness of the dangers of problem gambling and the availability and benefits of problem gambling treatment.

During the national awareness week, communities nationwide are working to raise awareness of the consequences of problem gambling and the resources available for individuals whose gambling is causing disruption in their lives.

Free problem gambling treatment for disordered gambling is available in Missouri to problem gamblers and the loved ones of problem gamblers. Information about treatment options in Missouri is available through the 24-hour toll-free problem gambling help line, 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633).

UPCOMING ALLIANCE EVENTS

March 6-8 – Pathways for Student Success in Osage Beach

March 6-12 – National Problem Gambling Awareness Week

March 12 – Rockwood High School Health Fair in Fenton

March 19-20 – Missouri Middle School Association conference in Osage Beach

April 7-9 – Partners in Prevention Conference in Kansas City

April 20-22 – Missouri Association of Drug Court Professionals in Osage Beach

May 18-20 – Missouri Spring Training Institute in Osage Beach

Alliance news and event schedules are available on the Web at: www.888betsoff.com

2005 Conference Set For Aug. 24-26

Mark your calendars now for Aug. 24-26, 2005, for the Second Annual Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling & Substance Abuse. Missouri will host the conference at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center in Kansas City.

Number Of Calls To 1-888-BETSOFF (1-888-238-7633)	
1998 - 871	2002 - 2,889
1999 - 1,034	2003 - 3,339
2000 - 1,738	2004 - 3,527
2001 - 2,846	

Counselors Are People Too - Great People

By Shelly Perez
Problem Gambling Program Coordinator
Missouri Lottery
Editor, Bets Off Bulletin

Counselors are great people! I know that because I just completed 60 hours of training with a great group of counselors who are now graduates of compulsive gambling counselor training.

I found that these 25 people, who are from throughout the state, are representative of Missouri's addiction counselors. They are caring, passionate, sincere, and they work diligently to make a positive difference in the lives of their clients. Their education, job titles and professional licenses/certifications may vary, but their desire to help Missouri residents with problem gambling issues is the same.

Missouri currently has 84 certified compulsive gambling counselors, not including the newest graduates of the 60-hour course. In addition to the 60-hour course, certification also requires that the individual be licensed as a professional counselor, clinical social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist in Missouri, or be certified as a Substance

Abuse Counselor I, II or Advanced through the Missouri Substance Abuse Counselors Certification Board. The qualifying credential must be in good standing to be eligible for compulsive gambling counselor certification.

Once certified, Missouri also requires that compulsive gambling counselors must meet specific renewal requirements for continuing education and keep their qualifying credential in good standing.

Missouri has one of the strongest certification processes for gambling counselors in the country, according to Joanna Franklin, a nationally renowned speaker and compulsive gambling counselor trainer. She said few other state programs require the full 60 hours of training that Missouri does.

For a number of years, through my job as the problem gambling coordinator at the Missouri Lottery, I have emphasized the importance of counseling in the recovery process for compulsive gamblers.

Part of my job at the Lottery and my role in the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling has been to report the strengths of Missouri's comprehensive problem gambling program and to help build awareness of the programs and problem gambling issues. Completing the 60-hour training program has given me a deeper understanding and respect for the job these counselors do.

Four trainers – Ms. Franklin, Keith Spare, Dan Smith and Arlene Miller - led my class through the physiological and psychological beginnings of problem gambling, assessment, treatment, education and prevention. They discussed various treatment theories, options and research and the value of treating the family members of compulsive gamblers, as well.

Among the various things I learned through this course, was the importance of the compulsive gambler finding or discovering his or her spirituality during the recovery process. While there may be many other issues, both biological and psychological, that need to be addressed through counseling, the individual's spirituality is frequently the key to a successful recovery.

Compulsive gamblers are often times very complex individuals and can have both physical and mental health issues that have not been identified or treated. Co-addictions are extremely high among problem gamblers, so assessment for all addictions is

important. About 20 percent of compulsive gamblers who have sought treatment for their addiction have attempted suicide.

I've learned that compulsive gambling counselors are special people, who have willingly taken on a job that is very difficult and often is emotionally taxing. That's why I've decided to keep my job. Yes, I still have deadlines – articles to write and items to edit – but when I shut off my computer at night, I can go home knowing that my job is done for the day.

I now know that the jobs of compulsive gambling counselors are never done – there are always crises and relapses that have to be dealt with and cases that are thought about even as they go to sleep at night. So, kudos to Missouri's compulsive gambling counselors, and thank you for your work and your compassion. Your work is helping to improve the lives of compulsive gamblers and their loved ones.



Participants in the recent compulsive gambling counselor training indicate the area of the state in which they reside by standing on a Missouri map located in the James C. Kirkpatrick State Information Center in Jefferson City.

1-888-BETSOFF

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2004 Alliance Annual Report Available Soon

Highlights of the Missouri Alliance to Curb Problem Gambling's past year will be featured in its 2004 annual report.

The report, which will include information on research, the Voluntary Exclusion Program and help line, will be released soon. The report will be available on the Alliance's Web site at www.888betsoff.org.

Want To Receive The Bulletin?

In an attempt to streamline costs, the *Bulletin* will be available through the Alliance's Web site, www.888betsoff.com. We are building 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: perezs@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."

Membership Is Key To A Strong Alliance

Keep informed about what's happening with problem gambling in Missouri and help develop Alliance programs by becoming a participating member of the Alliance.

Any individual or organization interested in promoting and furthering the Alliance's mission to educate Missouri residents on the potential characteristics and dangers of problem and compulsive gambling and promoting the availability of treatment can join the Missouri Alliance as a participating member.

Participating members are encouraged to:

- Participate in Alliance meetings and events;
- Aid in the planning of awareness events; and
- Provide input to further expand the Alliance's programs.

All memberships into the Alliance are free. For more information about becoming a participating member or to join, visit the Alliance's Web site at www.888BETSOFF.com or call (573) 522-1373.

Got A Story Idea?

The Alliance provides speakers for groups and organizations throughout the state on topics ranging from the prevention of youth gambling to the warning signs of problem gambling. For more information about the speakers' bureau or to arrange a presentation, please call (573) 526-7467 or (573) 522-1373.

All presentations are free of charge.



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 free treatment.