What steps does a person take to recover from a gambling addiction? How does a recovery-oriented system of care integrate treatment for people with gambling problems? Can online gaming operators help prevent problem gambling through science-based responsible gaming programs? What is the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of responsible gaming strategies and treatment services?

These questions and others are redefining the way that clinicians, public health officials, gaming industry leaders, regulators and researchers approach gambling disorders and responsible gaming. Titled “Exploring New Trends in Recovery, Research and Responsible Gaming,” the 13th annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction will discuss these emerging issues from Sept. 30 - Oct. 2 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas. The conference will bring together leading experts on addiction, gambling disorders, online gambling, minority health issues and responsible gaming. Gaming regulators and industry professionals will have the opportunity to learn about the health risks of pathological gambling and prospects for responsible gaming programs on Internet gambling sites, one of this growing sector’s most pressing issues. Simo Dragicevic, CEO of Bet Buddy, will report on published research that analyzed actual Internet gambling transactions to discern patterns of excessive gambling. Dragicevic will be joined by Mark Lipparelli, chairman of the Nevada Gaming Control Board.
Mitch Garber, CEO of Caesars Interactive Entertainment, and Clive Hawkswood, chief executive of the Remote Gambling Association, for a panel discussion on the possibilities of implementing effective responsible gaming strategies for Internet gambling operators. Other sessions tailored to industry representatives will examine how to evaluate government and corporate support of services for problem gamblers and analyze the research base for pre-commitment as a responsible gaming strategy.

Clinicians and public health specialists will be able to earn up to 14 continuing education hours by attending the conference sessions. Leaders in the movement for recovery-oriented systems of care, such as Dr. H. Westley Clark from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Dr. Alexandre Laudet from the National Development and Research Institutes will examine new definitions of recovery that go beyond abstinence from gambling. Dr. Thomas McLellan, CEO of the Treatment Research Institute and former science advisor and deputy director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, will discuss the challenges of implementing screening and brief interventions with clients with addictions. By discussing the science of recovery-oriented systems of care, attendees will be able to find new ways to join together as a community to address gambling disorders.

For more than a decade, the NCRG Conference has provided a unique forum where stakeholders in the field of gambling disorders and responsible gaming come together to discuss the latest research and discuss ways to apply those scientific findings to their daily lives. Registration is now open for the NCRG Conference. Visit www.ncrg.org/conference for more details about the event, online registration and hotel accommodations.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available for the 13th annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction. To learn more, please contact Amy Martin at 202-552-2689 or amartin@ncrg.org.

THANK YOU TO OUR CURRENT SPONSORS:
Earlier this year, the American Gaming Association (AGA) launched the “All In” campaign to highlight the gaming industry’s outstanding corporate social responsibility efforts in the areas of giving and volunteering, responsible gaming, diversity and environmental sustainability. The focus of the responsible gaming portion of the campaign will be the AGA’s 15th annual Responsible Gaming Education Week (RGEW), which will be held July 30 – Aug. 3.

“Responsible gaming is not just a casino issue; it is a community issue — and a crucial part of gaming companies’ efforts to be good community partners and corporate citizens,” said Frank Fahrenkopf, president and CEO of the AGA. “This year’s theme will ask employees to think about their relationship with this important issue and how they can be responsible gaming resources within their communities.”

In conjunction with RGEW and the “All In” campaign, the AGA will host a contest for industry employees through which they can creatively communicate what responsible gaming means to them. There will be three contest categories – essay, poster and video message — and casino properties and gaming companies are encouraged to have their employees create an entry as part of their RGEW activities. Following RGEW, companies will be asked to send employee submissions to the AGA, and the winning entries will be posted in a multi-media section of the AGA website devoted to the “All In” campaign.

Additionally, RGEW will mark the debut of a science-based guidebook for human resources (HR) and employee assistance (EA) professionals developed by the AGA and the National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG). This resource will help HR and EA professionals learn about gambling disorders and how to encourage responsible decisions when gambling. It also gives them the best tools to refer to employees who may need help. The new publication will be available on both organizations’ websites and will be distributed not only to casinos and gaming companies, but to national networks of HR and EA professionals.

During RGEW, the NCRG also will highlight the resources available that educate about gambling disorders and responsible gaming. EMERGE, which stands for Executive, Management and Employee Responsible Gaming Education, is a groundbreaking science-based training program that allows gaming employees access to training sessions 24/7. Researchers at Harvard Medical School developed the program, and the NCRG can customize it to fit each gaming operator’s training needs. Additionally, the NCRG will feature the resources available through the Partnership for Excellence in Education and Responsible Gaming (PEER) program. For more information, you can visit the NCRG’s website at www.ncrg.org/peerprogram.

To follow all of the activities for this year’s RGEW, participants are encouraged to connect with the AGA on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AmericanGaming) and on Twitter (@AGAUupdate) as well as the NCRG (www.facebook.com/theNCRG; @theNCRG).
In 2011, the National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG) celebrated its 15th anniversary of funding high impact research on gambling disorders and responsible gaming and developing groundbreaking programs designed to help the public better understand pathological and youth gambling. With a strong list of achievements since 1996, the organization is poised to accomplish even more in the future and has been very active in the first half of 2012.

Additions to the NCRG Board of Directors

In January, Alan Feldman, senior vice president of public affairs for MGM Resorts International, assumed chairmanship of the NCRG. Having served on the NCRG’s board of directors since 2000, Feldman has taken a leadership role on a wide array of gaming industry issues, with a particular focus on responsible gaming. Feldman replaced Glenn Christenson, managing director of Velstand Investments, LLC, who has served as chairman for three years and will remain on the board.

“Alan has long been a strong voice in the gaming industry on issue of responsible gaming and finding effective methods for addressing gambling disorders,” said Christenson. “He has an unwavering commitment to the NCRG, and I am delighted to remain on the NCRG board to support Alan’s leadership in this next phase for the organization.”

Additionally, the NCRG board elected Mark Vander Linden, executive officer of the Office of Gambling Treatment and Prevention at the Iowa Department of Public Health, and Andrew Zarnett, managing director of Deutsche Bank Securities. These gentlemen bring substantial experience in the economics and public health sectors to the NCRG board.

AGEM-AGA Golf Tournament Reaches the “Drive for $1 Million”

On May 1, approximately 130 golfers gathered at Cascata in Boulder City, Nev., at the 14th annual AGEM-AGA Golf Classic presented by JCM Global. During its first 13 years, AGEM-AGA Golf Classic raised nearly $950,000 for the NCRG, demonstrating the industry’s dedication to funding the highest quality research on gambling disorders and responsible gaming. This year’s tournament raised a record yearly amount of $133,000 and reached the $1 million goal through the “Drive for $1 Million” campaign. AGA President and CEO Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr. and former NCRG Chairman Glenn Christenson were on hand to thank the sponsors and golfers. Christenson also explained the significant impact that the funds raised by the tournament have had on the field of gambling disorders research and resources provided by the NCRG.

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NCRG: On the Road and In the News

The NCRG has been collaborating with new partners and expanding ongoing initiatives to bring more resources and education opportunities to the public than ever before. In conjunction with the NCAA tournament, the NCRG distributed a multimedia news release about CollegeGambling.org to encourage students, parents and college officials to learn more about gambling and gambling-related harms on campus. The NCRG also was invited to present to an audience of 50 student affairs and athletics staff members at the NCAA Missouri Gambling Summit in February. Dr. Matthew Martens, an associate professor at the University of Missouri - Columbia, and Amy Martin, communications and outreach manager for the NCRG, presented on the latest research and resources that addresses the issue of college gambling, including CollegeGambling.org.

Additionally, members of the NCRG staff presented at many regional and national conferences throughout the summer months. Martin presented at both the Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse in Kansas City, Mo., and the National Council on Problem Gambling in Milwaukee, Wisc.; Nathan Smith, program officer for the NCRG, exhibited at the American Society of Addiction Medicine in Atlanta, Ga. Finally, Christine Reilly, senior research director for the NCRG, attended the College on Problems of Drug Dependence conference in Palm Springs, Calif., in June.

Finally, all NCRG staff members were present as Reilly testified before the Massachusetts Gaming Commission during its fourth public forum on June 27. Reilly was among eight presenters discussing the latest research on gambling disorders and their recommendations for the commission. Other speakers included NCRG board members Kevin Mullally and Mark Vander Linden, NCRG-funded researchers Debi LaPlante, Ph.D., and Sarah Nelson, Ph.D., from Harvard Medical School, as well as Marlene Warner, executive director of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling.

The NCRG brought education directly to users’ computers through the two recent sessions of the NCRG Webinar Series, coordinated in conjunction with Global Gaming Expo. The first session, titled “Science vs. Myth: Research on Internet Gambling,” was held on March 6 and was led by Dr. Sarah Nelson, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. The second webinar, which took place on June 20, was led by Dr. Serena King, an assistant professor at Hamline University. This session discussed the latest trends in genetics, environmental factors and psychiatric disorders in the development of gambling disorders during the transition to young adulthood.
For the sixth year, the National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG) hit the road for the Annual Education Summit. This series of events is designed to educate a variety of stakeholders about responsible gaming, the latest research findings about gambling disorders and the resources that the NCRG has to offer. This year’s Summit took place on April 30 – May 2 in Miami, Fla., where leading researchers and representatives from the NCRG met with various partners from the business, mental health, academic, clinical and commercial gaming industries, as well as members of the media.

The 2012 Annual Education Summit started on April 30 with a gathering of Miami-area mental health community leaders for a roundtable discussion at the University of Miami. Mental health experts learned how they can use the most up-to-date research findings in their daily practice and how collaborative efforts can effectively address gambling disorders in their community. Alan Feldman, chairman of the NCRG and senior vice president of public affairs for MGM Resorts International, moderated the discussion while Drs. Ken Winters of the University of Minnesota and Carlos Blanco from Columbia University explained recent studies that have examined pathological gambling, especially among minority populations. Dr. Winters is a professor of psychiatry at the University of Minnesota and NCRG Scientific Advisory Board member. Dr. Blanco is a professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

A highlight of this year’s Annual Education Summit was a luncheon co-sponsored by the NCRG and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce on May 1. More than 70 business and civic leaders attended the presentation by Feldman and Dr. Winters that examined the many ways that both the commercial casino industry and the larger business community could collaborate to encourage the promotion of responsible gaming best practices.

Dr. William Samek, past president of the Florida Psychological Association, talks about the challenges clinicians face when treating clients with gambling disorders.
throughout the state. “It is only through collaboration and cooperation that communities can truly endorse a comprehensive approach to gambling disorders and responsible gaming,” Feldman said. Dr. Winters spoke about the impact that NCRG-funded research has made over the past 16 years, as well as the role that the NCRG has played in translating those research findings into applicable tools that are useful for all community members.

Following the luncheon, NCRG representatives met with University of Miami administrators, student affairs professionals and researchers to discuss gambling and gambling-related harms on college campuses. Christine Reilly, senior research director for the NCRG, discussed the NCRG’s latest resource to address this issue, CollegeGambling.org. To show how attendees could use this resource with their students and leadership on campus, Reilly explained each section of the website and described the ways that the NCRG will continue to develop CollegeGambling.org in the future.

The Annual Education Summit wrapped up on May 2 with a workshop for treatment providers hosted in partnership with the Florida Psychological Association. Dr. Winters led the session with his overview of screening and assessments for pathological gambling and the latest research on youth gambling. Dr. Blanco presented his findings from the landmark study that looked at rates of gambling disorders among Hispanic Americans. This training also kicked off the NCRG’s 2012 Treatment Provider Workshop Series, which will travel to six cities this year for presentations from some of the field’s leading researchers and clinicians.

Between the various meetings, there were several opportunities for NCRG representatives to sit down with members of the media and discuss the NCRG’s accomplishments, as well as future goals for the organization. Feldman and Dr. Winters met with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, a meeting that led to three articles that ran in both the Sun-Sentinel and The Miami Herald. Dr. Blanco also was interviewed by Telemundo and Radio Caracol, national Spanish-language television and radio outlets, and directed viewers and listeners to the NCRG’s resources including the “Talking with Children about Gambling” brochure in Spanish.

The NCRG conducted its first road tour in 2007, and has visited Cleveland, Ohio; Boston, Mass.; Denver and Central City/Black Hawk, Colo.; Chicago, Ill.; Des Moines, Iowa; Kansas City, Mo.; Las Vegas, Nev.; and Philadelphia, Pa.
What is a “social network analysis” of gambling disorders and responsible gaming? The phrase might evoke images of Mark Zuckerberg in a hooded sweatshirt, or the Oscar-winning film about the creation of Facebook. In reality, a social network analysis (SNA) is a method that researchers use to study how social connections effect behaviors, such as problem or pathological gambling.

“It's important to realize that this research relates to the naturally occurring social networks that we all have with people we actually know, and not in particular to social technologies like Facebook or Twitter,” said Dr. Adam Goodie, an associate professor at the University of Georgia and director of the Georgia Decisions Lab.

Dr. Goodie and his team recently received a $172,000 grant from the NCRG to study how social connections may impact an individual’s gambling behavior. How do researchers in this field study something as intangible as social connections? “There are two basic approaches,” said Dr. Goodie. “In an ‘egocentric’ type of study, each participant reports on his or her own personal network, and there is no assumption that any two participants know each other.”

The other type is a “sociocentric” analysis, which studies all members of an existing social structure and examines the many relationships and bonds that influence the members’ perspectives and behaviors. The team at University of Georgia will take an “egocentric” approach to learning about the lives and gambling behaviors of nearly 250 frequent gamblers and their 30 closest social connections, a project that will produce information on more than 7,000 people.

Dr. Goodie’s team will evaluate a gambler’s social networks on two major characteristics: “density” and “centrality.” Density is the degree to which members of your network know other members. In this case, the more that people in a network know each other, the “denser” the network. “Centrality” describes the degree to which a person in a given network has connections with others in that same social circle, often becoming a person of influence. (e.g., a spouse who knows almost all of your social contacts would have high centrality).

By using these metrics, the researchers will measure how

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The team at University of Georgia will take an “egocentric” approach to learning about the lives and gambling behaviors of nearly 250 frequent gamblers and their 30 closest social connections, a project that will produce information on more than 7,000 people.
problematic gambling behavior impacts the relationships of those surrounding the individual who has been diagnosed with pathological gambling. For relatively simple relationships between the gambling behavior of an individual and their peers, the social network analysis may show something completely different than more complex relationships, depending on how close or “dense” the social network of a pathological gambler is when compared with non-gambling situations.

The researchers also will be looking at how an individual’s problematic gambling behavior correlates with other potential disorders, such as substance abuse. “We know that problem gamblers tend to have these traits themselves,” said Dr. Goodie “and we are exploring whether their entire networks might possess these traits to a greater degree than non-problem gamblers.”

Once Dr. Goodie and his team have more insight into the relationships between social networks and gambling behavior, those findings will allow them to ask additional questions about how these research findings translate to real-world relationships. Though the proposed research hopes to shed light on how social factors contribute to gambling behavior, there is still plenty of research to be done on individual factors such as personality traits and brain chemistry. “As is so often the case in the real world, finding that one factor has a causal role usually doesn’t rule out the possibility that other factors also play roles.” Dr. Goodie said.
In the public health and recovery arena, there has been a shift in how mental health professionals understand how to best help those who want treatment for gambling disorders. As a guiding principal of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the principles of “recovery-oriented systems of care” are redefining treatment methods for behavioral health agencies. Thanks to Mark Vander Linden, executive officer for the Iowa Gambling Treatment Program, and his team at the Iowa Department of Public Health, this new definition of recovery is providing a new framework to help those with gambling disorders across the state. Their collective efforts serve as a model for public health officials about how to collaborate with key stakeholders to make sure the needs of a community are met in terms of problem and pathological gambling recovery services.

According to Vander Linden, a recovery-oriented system of care is “not a brand new concept, but is a rethinking of how to organize services that the state provides to problem and pathological gamblers.” This approach to treatment is person-centered and self-directed, allowing the individual to rely on their strengths and build on the resilience of their family, community and other support systems.

“In recovery-oriented systems of care, patients are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health,” said Vander Linden. “It also helps eliminate the obstacles that stand in their way, some being very tangible problems.”

Research shows that only 12 – 15 percent of those diagnosed with pathological gambling seek formal treatment. Common barriers to following through with treatment include the inability to afford treatment due to a lack of money or health insurance, a lack of access to resources and ambivalence about changing problematic behavior.

After a comprehensive evaluation of their services in 2011, the Iowa Gambling Treatment Program determined that implementing a recovery-oriented system of care required them to increase the tools and resources for clinicians and the general public. “We wanted to expand the view of what ‘treatment’ looks like for these individuals,” said Vander Linden.

One way that Iowa is accomplishing this goal is through their recovery support services program, which includes a broad array of community-based resources designed to enhance the client’s recovery. For example, some who struggle with pathological gambling also experience unmanageable debt. Iowa’s recovery support services menu includes housing assistance so a patient can keep utilities running at their residence and gas cards to help them travel to counseling appointments. The Iowa Gambling Treatment Program also offers Electronic Recovery Support Messaging, which sends encouraging and informative emails to the person in recovery to help improve their health, life quality and wellness.

Iowa’s shift to a recovery-oriented system of care required the collaboration of key players throughout the state. In 2011, the Iowa Department of Public Health released a survey of adult Iowa’s gambling behaviors and attitudes. This report illustrated that the state’s public health leaders needed to engage key stakeholders in cooperative efforts, including convening these groups for education and prevention programs.

“The work doesn’t start and end with the treatment providers who are only focused on clients with a gambling disorder. It also includes...
Singapore is one of the fastest growing gaming markets and is poised to become the second largest gaming destination in the world. Before the doors opened to the first casino, the country’s government and operators put many safeguards in place to prevent gambling disorders, including several types of voluntary exclusion lists and entry fees for individuals to pay before entering a casino. One organization that is paving the way to educate Singaporeans about pathological gambling and provide resources for help is the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS), which has had the greatest success with online education efforts.

Founded in 2008, the mission of NAMS is to treat pathological gambling and other addictions through inpatient and outpatient services, counseling services and education groups focusing on increasing awareness and education about gambling disorders.

In their first two years of operation, NAMS counselors discovered that gambling addiction remained the third-most common diagnosis in their treatment facilities, after drug (most common) and alcohol addiction. From April 2010 to March 2011, NAMS treated 398 patients for gambling disorders. Of these, 259 were new patients. This number represents about 21 percent of all new addiction cases seen by NAMS.

In response to these treatment rates, NAMS has rolled out two new initiatives to provide assistance, resources and support to both problem gamblers and their families.

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The first initiative is an online, interactive self-help workbook designed for problem gamblers who are experiencing minor to mild problems and are reluctant to seek formal treatment. It serves as an initial, accessible way for individuals to gain greater insight into their gambling behavior and is culturally sensitive to the needs of the Singapore community.

Comprising five chapters, the workbook guides users to look at their triggers for gambling, provides information that challenges many of the common beliefs held by problem gamblers and has information on how to develop strategies to say "no" to gambling opportunities and limit access to money. The chapters delineate what a gambling disorder is, how to recognize problem gambling and actionable steps individuals can take to manage their addiction.

“Through this workbook, we hope to marry the benefits of the Internet — the accessibility and flexibility it offers — with the non-threatening concept of a self-guided intervention,” said Lawrence Tan, a NAMS psychologist and a member of the workbook’s development team. However, he also cautioned that “[self-guided interventions] are meant only as a treatment adjunct, and as a first step to raise the gambler’s awareness of his/her own gambling behavior so that he/she can consider seeking professional help. Online self-guided interventions are not meant to replace traditional modes of treatment.”

The second initiative launched by NAMS is a group psycho-education program entitled “Families in Recovery through Education & Empowerment” (FREE). Because gamblers themselves are often resistant to seeking help, the family becomes an important avenue for intervention. To assist these families, NAMS started the FREE pilot outreach program, which covers how to recognize gambling addiction, the impact on families, the best practices for family members to help their loved ones, treatment services at NAMS, and other community resources.

“The FREE program makes information and support from addictions professionals easily accessible to families of problematic gamblers not in treatment,” said Wong Kim Eng, clinical director of NAMS and associate professor for Singapore’s Institute of Mental Health. “By offering this service, we want to reach out to these families so that they do not have to struggle alone.”

The FREE program has a history of being a helpful resource for participants. “I have two uncles whose successful careers and family lives went downhill because of their gambling problems,” said one individual, who wished to remain anonymous. “They also borrowed heavily from friends and relatives, including my family. Clearly, they needed help but were unwilling to seek it. Witnessing their problems, I attended FREE with two other close family members. I find that FREE empowers family members with the knowledge of how to identify problem gambling in its various stages and equips them with a clear action plan to arrest the development of the problem. FREE is also an avenue where affected family members can seek advice, get their questions answered and find support.”

For more information, visit www.nams.sg.
This March, the Problem Gambling Council of Colorado (PGCC) and the Colorado Lottery joined forces to help students showcase their creativity and educate the community about gambling disorders and responsible gaming through the first “21 is a Must” scholarship contest. High school and college students from across the state were invited to create a poster educating youth about the age requirement for gambling and the warning signs of problem gambling. Entrants competed for two scholarships: the first-place winner received a $2,000 award and the runner-up was awarded $1,000.

“The creativity, originality, content and style of the entries exceeded our expectations, as did the educational value of the submissions,” said Lois Rice, PGCC board member and executive director of the Colorado Gaming Association. “The excellence of these entries made it extremely difficult to select a winner.”

While only in its first year, 14 students entered the contest, and the first-place scholarship went to Hannah Byerly from Trinidad State Junior College; Kelly Carter from Colorado State University received the second place scholarship. Byerly’s entry included a student who was standing on the side of the road, with a sign stating “Don’t Bet Your Future.” “When adolescents are making the choice to gamble underage, they are betting more than they think,” Byerly said.

The winning posters will be reproduced and distributed in educational marketing materials throughout Colorado during the American Gaming Association’s (AGA) Responsible Gaming Education Week (RGEW) from July 30 – Aug. 3. This annual event was created by the AGA to promote the industry’s ongoing efforts to educate employees, patrons and the public about responsible gaming. It also provides gaming companies and problem gambling associations across the country with an opportunity to expand their existing efforts to address the issues of underage and problem gaming.

“We work diligently with our partners in the gaming community to constantly reinforce the age requirements for participating in gaming activities and to educate the public about problem gambling,” said Matt Robbins, Community Relations Specialist for the Colorado Lottery and PGCC Board member. “The poster contest is a great way to engage young people in this effort, and we’re proud to be involved. Given the success of this year’s program, we look forward to next year’s contest.”
As middle and high school students head back to the classroom this fall, the National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG), in partnership with Young Minds Inspired (YMI), will distribute the back-to-school initiative titled “Know the Odds.” Last fall, the NCRG and YMI developed this program based on the NCRG’s brochure “Talking with Children about Gambling.” The material debuted in more than 410 schools in Las Vegas, Nev., Biloxi, Miss., and Atlantic City, N.J. For 2012, the program will expand to include not only those same cities, but new markets, such as Philadelphia, Pa., Chicago, Ill., St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo., Reno, Nev., Miami, Fla., and San Diego, Calif.

“We’re excited about this program and gratified to be working with Young Minds Inspired,” said NCRG Chairman Alan Feldman. This is an organization with a successful track record of creating educational programs to stimulate young adults.”

The “Know the Odds” school initiative aims to encourage teachers and parents to help students understand the warning signs of problem gambling and the facts about underage gambling. A component of the program provides teachers with training materials that include a program guide, classroom posters and handouts for students and parents that meet both national education standards and practical classroom needs. All materials are provided to schools free of charge.

The primary component of the curriculum is the “Talking with Children about Gambling” brochure, a research-based guide created by the NCRG in consultation with the Division on Addictions at Cambridge Health Alliance, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. It was designed to help parents, and others who work with youth, deter children from gambling and recognize possible warning signs of problem gambling and other risky behaviors.

The NCRG decided to publish “Talking with Children about Gambling” after a study of empirical research revealed that adolescents are at a higher risk for developing a gambling disorder than adults. Studies show that children between the ages of 14 and 19 are two to seven times more likely to develop a problem with gambling than adults. An estimated 6 to 15 percent of youth have gambling problems that are less severe, while only 2 to 3 percent of adults fall into this category. Additionally, most adults with a gambling problem started gambling at an early age.

Because youth gambling is not always easily visible, the aim of the brochure and the school initiative is to alert parents of the potential risks of such activities and offer helpful guidelines for those who may suspect their children might have a problem with gambling or other risky behaviors.

The guidelines in the brochure and the “Know the Odds” materials are grounded in research findings that help parents understand why young people engage in
risky behaviors despite negative consequences, and what can be done to help them make better choices. Specifically, it advises parents on how to:

- steer their children away from risky behaviors by monitoring their activities without being controlling;
- create an open environment for communication;
- set clear rules;
- help them develop healthy coping strategies for the stresses of adolescence; and
- understand how their attitudes toward gambling and gambling behavior might influence their children.

The brochure also provides parents with information on where to find assistance if their child does indeed have a gambling problem. It is available in both English and Spanish as a free download in the Public Education and Outreach section of www.ncrg.org.

A key part of the National Center for Responsible Gaming’s (NCRG) mission is to translate the latest research findings about pathological and youth gambling into practical real-world applications. This includes the creation of the NCRG’s Treatment Provider Workshop Series, a set of regional training sessions for counselors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. Launched in 2011, the series provides clinicians the opportunity to learn directly from research experts, giving them the latest science-based information and best practices on a wide range of topics relating to gambling disorders. With six workshops in 2011 and more on the way in the coming year, this NCRG program is off to a great start.

The idea for this ongoing program sprang from the 2010 NCRG Annual Education Summit in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Jon E. Grant, co-director of the Impulse Control Disorders Clinic and principal investigator of the NCRG Center of Excellence in Gambling Research at the University of Minnesota, led a training session for clinicians in a jurisdiction that had just legalized an expansion of casinos into its area. In partnership with the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County, the NCRG organized a free workshop for mental health professionals and offered continuing education credits. Approximately 100 participants attended, and its success opened the doors for the NCRG to continue this model in other locations across the nation.

In 2011, the NCRG officially launched the Treatment Provider Workshop Series in Boston, Mass., NCRG-funded researcher Dr. Matthew Martens of the University of Missouri - Columbia presents his research to clinicians at a treatment provider workshop in Detroit, Mich. in October 2011.
fittingly during that year’s Summit. Dr. Lisa Najavits, a professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine and member of the NCRG Scientific Advisory Board, conducted a session about a science-based treatment method for those with post-traumatic stress disorder and pathological gambling. This training was held in partnership with the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. Other 2011 workshop sessions were held in Iowa City, Iowa, San Diego, Calif., Las Vegas, Nev. and Detroit, Mich.

“Each session of the NCRG’s Treatment Provider Workshop is important for making sure that clinicians are exposed to the latest research and resources, as it’s an important part of their continuing education,” said Christine Reilly, senior research director for the NCRG. “We are pleased to be able to bring the researchers and clinicians face-to-face, since so many of the clinicians don’t specialize in treating gambling disorders. Because it is a free training, even the public and gaming industry employees are encouraged to participate.”

The 2012 NCRG Treatment Provider Workshop Series is well underway, having already conducted two trainings. The first was led by Dr. Ken Winters of the University of Minnesota during the Annual Education Summit in Miami, Fla. Dr. Winters gave an overview of the assessment tools most often used to diagnose gambling disorders. On May 18, Dr. Grant returned to lead a session for Pittsburgh, Pa., clinicians titled “Helping Clients Overcome Impulse Control Disorders and Address Youth Gambling.”

Additional sessions in the 2012 training series include stops in Kansas City, Mo., with Dr. Serena King, an assistant professor at Hamline University, on June 7; Las Vegas, Nev., with Dr. Najavits on Sept. 29; and additional trainings that are being scheduled in Denver, Colo., and Indianapolis, Ind. For more information on future workshop sessions, visit the NCRG’s public education and outreach section at www.ncrg.org.

The NCRG is currently planning sessions for 2013 and looking for local partners to collaborate on these workshops. Anyone interested in partnering to provide a training session should contact Amy Martin, communications and outreach manager for the NCRG, at amartin@ncrg.org or 202-552-2689.
Research has shown that between 12 to 15 percent of people with gambling problems will seek treatment. How can the other 85 percent get help? This question is at the heart of a new set of online self-help tools developed by The Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. The Self-Help Gambling Tools, available at www.ProblemGambling.ca, are based on research by Dr. David Hodgins, professor of psychology at the University of Calgary and the 2010 NCRG Scientific Achievement Award winner.

Dr. Hodgins has been studying the usefulness of self-help workbooks for pathological gamblers for more than 10 years. Like workbooks, the tools on the PGIO’s website were designed to provide access to information and resources at any time from any location. This open access helps to avoid common barriers for seeking treatment such as shame, time constraints, lack of transportation and having to admit to others that one might have a gambling problem.

The information on the PGIO’s website provides four categories of self-help tools and resources. The Self Assessment portion explores an individual’s reasons for gambling excessively and potential consequences. The Making Your Decision section gives the participant the opportunity to outline their thoughts of the costs of gambling and set goals to stop problem gambling behavior. Reaching Your Goal explains the practical applications of how to recover from a gambling disorder and helps the person by giving tips on how to minimize harm and deal with the consequences. Finally, the Maintaining Your Goal section examines the ongoing recovery from a gambling disorder, including tips on repairing relationships and avoiding relapse.

The website also provides information for family and friends concerned about a loved one’s gambling behaviors, such as advice on taking care of finances, setting limits and encouraging someone to seek treatment.

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In the coming months, PGIO will also release a mobile app, titled “Monitor Your Gambling and Urges” (MYGU). This web tool allows a user to keep track of when they feel the urge to gamble, whether or not they gambled, how they avoided (or didn’t avoid) gambling and the feelings associated with these behaviors. MYGU can also use this data to create reports to help an individual objectively see their responses over time and understand if their urges are decreasing, increasing or staying the same.

“If you’re trying to resist gambling urges, you might find doing these activities is a great way to avoid the temptation to gamble,” said Robert Murray, manager of the problem gambling project at the PGIO.

Therapists and other helping professionals can also use these tools to complement their counseling sessions by encouraging their clients to access them from home between visits.

This data can also be used by researchers interested in studying gambling urges and behaviors. When an individual registers for the service they have the option to grant researchers access to their anonymous demographic and behavioral data. This information may provide researchers with new insights into the feelings associated with gambling disorders, which may improve the effectiveness of the self-help workbooks and inform research on this field.

Since the toolkit launched in April 2012, the website has received more than 5,000 total visits and more than 350 people have registered to use the online tools. Additionally, almost 50 percent of returning users have visited the site more than 9 times, suggesting that they are finding the information and tools useful enough to access repeatedly. “It allowed me to examine myself and find ways to improve while developing skills,” said an anonymous user.

### 2012 Calendar of Events

**July 13 - 14**  
26th Annual National Conference on Problem Gambling  
Milwaukee, Wisc.

**Aug. 16 - 17**  
16th Annual Responsible Gaming Association of New Mexico Conference  
Albuquerque, N.M.

**July 30 - Aug. 3**  
Responsible Gaming Education Week

**Sept. 29**  
NCRG Treatment Provider Workshop for Nevada Clinicians  
Las Vegas, Nev.

**Sept. 30 - Oct. 2**  
13th Annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction  
Las Vegas, Nev.

**Oct. 1 - 4**  
Global Gaming Expo  
Las Vegas, Nev.

If you know of events that should be included on the RGQ calendar, e-mail your suggestions to amartin@ncrg.org.