

# 1♥800♦GAMBLER

The Problem Gambling Help Network of WV

## ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

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# In Loving Memory

This annual report is dedicated to two long-time network counselors, **Sandra Street-LoveJoy** (1942-2020) and **Nancy Wolfe-Dilgard** (1952-2020), who both passed this year. Sandra and Nancy were Internationally Certified Gambling Counselors, and both had previously been named "Counselor of the Year" for the program. They were true assets to their community and to the network, and are greatly missed!



Gambling addiction continues to be a serious problem for many in West Virginia. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, one in 50 West Virginians may have a gambling problem. West Virginia has five casinos that include slot machines, horse and dog racing, table games, and sports betting. West Virginia also offers lottery tickets, bingo, tip tickets, KENO, and over 7,000 video poker machines in video poker parlors statewide. This year, advertising for mobile sports betting apps became ubiquitous, appearing on billboards, infomercials, television commercials, digital ads, and throughout sporting events. Plans to launch an iGaming app, which will allow betting on casino-style games via mobile app, are underway.

The Problem Gambling Help Network of West Virginia offers comprehensive care for people who struggle with problem gambling. Services are also offered for their loved ones. The 1-800-GAMBLER helpline and chat services are available 24/7. The line is staffed with master’s level clinicians. All callers are offered crisis counseling, educational mailings, referrals, and follow-ups. They are referred for an in-person appointment with one of the 60+ specially trained clinicians. Telehealth appointments with these providers are also available. The program pays for the initial consultation for any caller who attends an appointment, and pays for subsequent sessions for those who have no payment source. The program offers at least one “Retreat Weekend” per year, which brings together problem gamblers and their loved ones for a weekend of treatment, education, fellowship, and recovery support. All callers are offered the opportunity to take part in a weekly online support group, hosted by the staff.

## Staff

Lata Menon, MSW, LGSW, CEO

David Sheppard, CPA, CFO

Jennifer Davis-Walton, MA, ICGC-II, Program Director

Lisa Lewis, MSW, LGSW, Program Coordinator

Maricel Bernardo, MSM-HCA, Program Coordinator

Sheila Moran, MSW, LSW, ICGC, Director of Marketing

Jeremy Smith, MA, Outreach Coordinator

Adam Sypolt, Media Coordinator

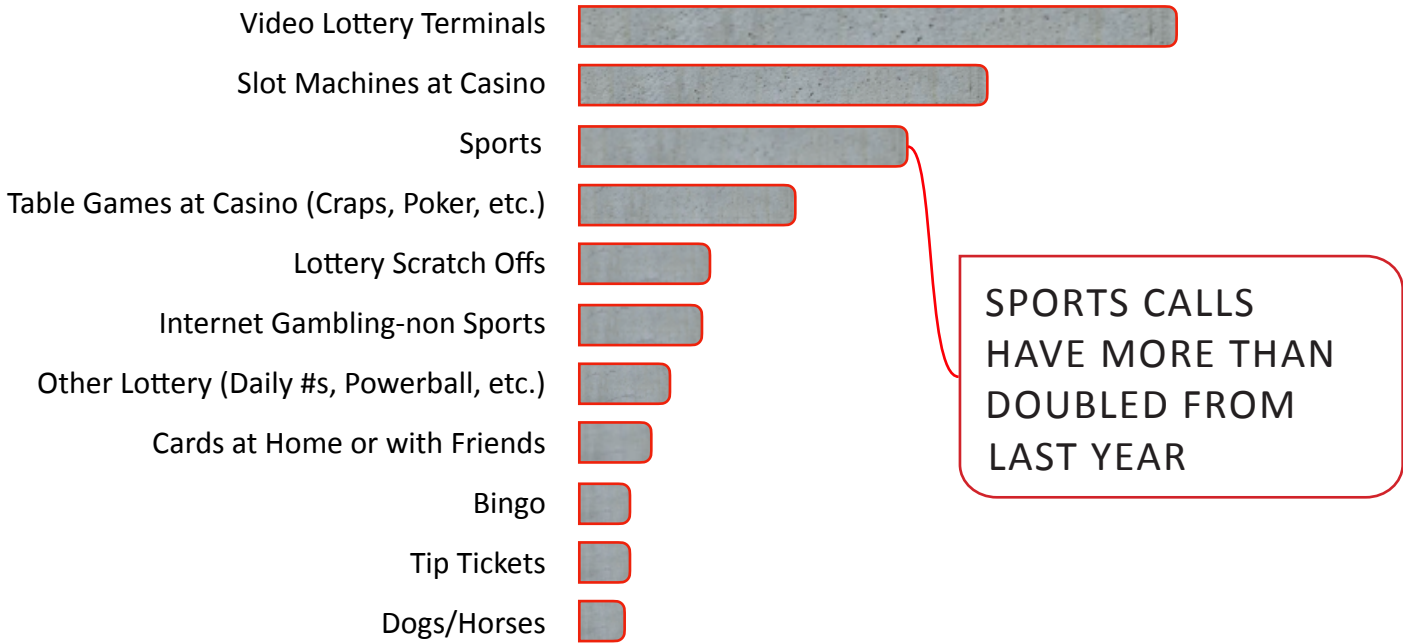
Kay Goff, Office Manager

Tammy Samms, Accounting Assistant

# Helpline Data

The telephone line and chat services are staffed 24/7. This year, over 1,000 people contacted the program with 474 completing an intake. All callers are offered immediate crisis counseling, support group referral, self-help literature, and an appointment with one of the network counselors.

Most frequently cited types of gambling, in order of most to least:



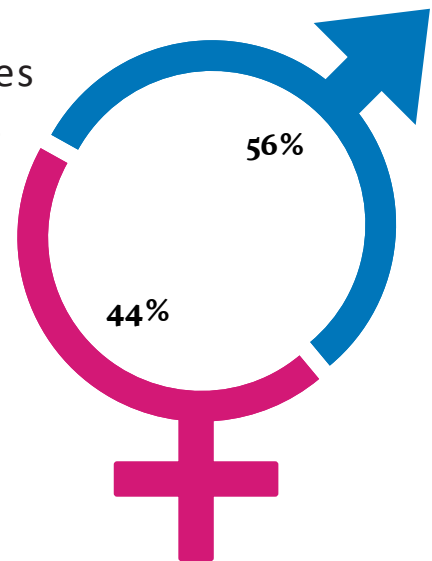
These were the most common symptoms of gambling disorder mentioned by helpline callers, in order of most frequent:



Most common types of financial problems experienced by helpline callers, in order of most to least:



For the first time in program history, males are calling more frequently than females.



# Follow-Ups

Those who do not attend an appointment, but agree to emailed/mailed resources, receive a call one week after their initial call. Those who attend an appointment get a reminder call before the appointment and a follow-up after their appointment. All callers can receive follow-up calls at three months, six months, and one year from their initial call.

## One Year Recovery Status:

Not Gambling	55%
Decreased Gambling	28%
Same	17%

Ability to Handle Problems:

Better	75%
Same	21%
Worse	4%

How do you feel about yourself:

Better	82%
Same	9%
Worse	9%

Reduced Debt:

Reduced	90%
Still in	10%

Relationship with Family:

Better	64%
Same	18%
Worse	18%

Job Performance:

Better	100%
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Recreational Activity:

Better	100%
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## Six Month Recovery Status:

Not Gambling	50%
Decreased Gambling	34%
Increased Gambling	4%
Same	12%

Ability to Handle Problems:

Better	81%
Same	12%
Worse	7%

How do you feel about yourself:

Better	82.5%
Same	12.5%
Worse	5%

Reduced Debt:

Reduced	75%
Still in	25%

Relationship with Family:

Better	74%
Same	17%
Worse	9%

Job Performance:

Better	60%
Same	40%

Recreational Activity:

Better	86%
Same	14%

## Three Month Recovery Status:

Not Gambling	60%
Decreased Gambling	22%
Increased Gambling	2%
Same	16%

Ability to Handle Problems:

Better	78%
Same	22%

How do you feel about yourself:

Better	80%
Same	20%

Reduced Debt:

Reduced	76%
Still in	24%

Relationship with Family:

Better	79%
Same	8%
Worse	13%

Job Performance:

Better	67%
Same	33%

Recreational Activity:

Better	80%
Same	20%

# Marketing

Two different digital ad campaigns were conducted to reach problem gamblers. One was a general campaign targeting those who have an interest in gambling, and the other specifically targeted sports gamblers. Targeted mobile marketing was used to reach those with the most need. Using geofence technology, mobile advertisements were sent to people who visited casinos and video gambling establishments. Information on the program was also provided to those in the state who were looking online for information about problem gambling, or who were visiting online gambling sites.

Billboards are one of the most common ways callers say they learned about the services. There was a billboard campaign in the fall and spring of this year.



To capture the emerging market of sports bettors, commercials were produced to promote responsible gambling and were aired during popular college and professional sports events.



# Outreach

Community outreach is a key part of the program. This year, dozens of professional conferences, health fairs, and community events were attended.



(Left) Dr. Sherri Young of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department hosted staff members Maricel Bernardo and Sheila Moran for a podcast on problem gambling.

(Below) Maricel Bernardo exhibiting at the Walk to End Alzheimers event in Charleston



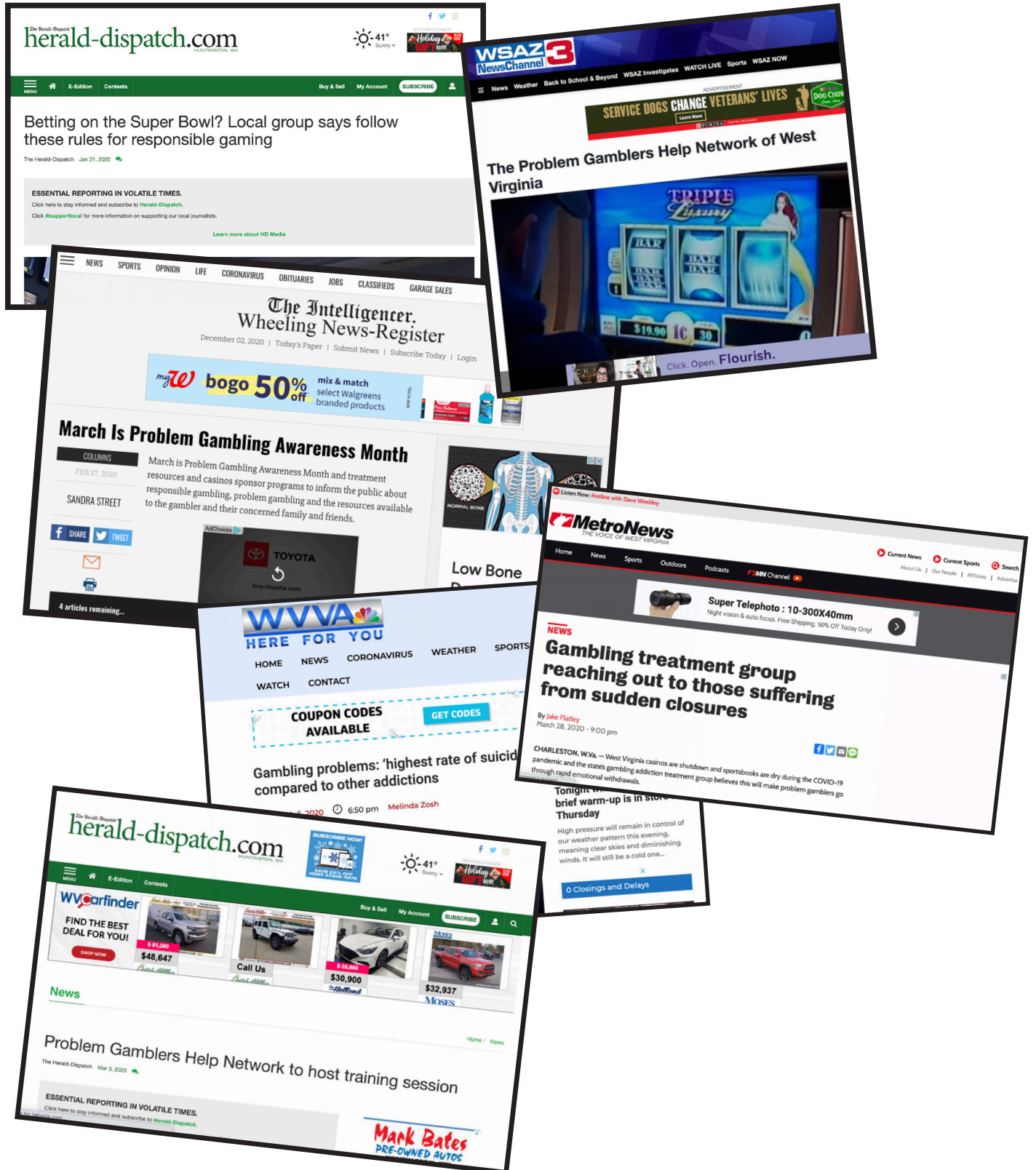
(Above) West Virginia Counseling Association Board Member Ted Williams and Sheila Moran at the West Virginia Counseling Association Annual Conference



**1-800-GAMBLER**  
The Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia



Work is performed all year to garner local media coverage of problem gambling, highlighting the program as a path to recovery.



The West Virginia Lottery and gambling venues provide information to their customers on responsible gambling. Brochures are provided to the state's casinos on their request. This year, Hollywood Casino in Charles Town participated in Responsible Gaming Education Week.



Pursuant to W. Va. Code §29-22A-9(f)(13) and W. Va. C.S.R. §179-5-11.4.a., each video lottery terminal establishment must display a poster with the wording above. This year, the graphic was enhanced and distributed to all 1,200 establishments.



# Online

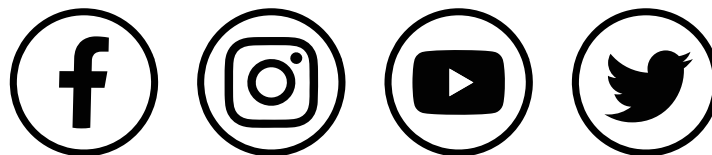


## Website

The website had 38,000 unique visitors this year. This is a 150 percent increase from last year. Online presence is optimized and the program is often at the top of search results for West Virginians looking for help with a gambling problem. Website users can chat online 24/7, search for treatment resources in their area, and view self-help material.



Highlighted on the website is an interactive Lie/Bet Questionnaire, which is a two-question screening tool for pathological gambling. The questions were selected from the DSM-5 criteria for pathological gambling because they were identified as the best predictors of pathological gambling. Answering “Yes” to either question indicates a possible problem and a need for further assessment. There were 1,038 people who used the tool. Of those, 768 were seeking help for themselves, and the rest were seeking help for a loved one. This is a 58 percent increase from last year. Of those, 809 said they had lied about their gambling, and 900 said they felt the need to increase their bets. All nine DSM symptoms are listed as a separate interactive quiz. There were 546 people who took this quiz to evaluate their symptoms. Almost every visitor endorsed at least one symptom.



## Social Media

In addition to the website, there is also a very active social media presence that helps to educate and promote the services provided. 651,893 people were reached on Facebook. The posts engaged with 10,076 people, including likes, link clicks, comments, and shares. Twitter had 49,170 impressions. There were also posts and engagement on Instagram.



# Training



Scholarships were offered to several staff and network counselors to attend the 2019 National Conference on Problem Gambling.



In Fall 2019, there was a 35-hour training for 11 clinicians to become part of the network.



In Spring 2020, a course was hosted for the general public titled "Problem Gambling in West Virginia." Two courses were offered for counseling professionals titled "Military and Veteran Culture: Treatment Considerations," one titled "Ethics and Problem Gambling Treatment," and one titled "Emerging Trends in Treating Problem Gambling."

# Prevention

According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, youth are significantly more likely to develop a gambling addiction than adults, and those who start gambling young are more likely to develop gambling problems throughout their life. This year, several presentations were done focusing on the issues of youth gambling and the intersection between Gambling Disorder and Gaming Disorder. Much of this focuses on the “gamification” of gambling, and the “gamblification” of gaming. Many gambling products now look and perform very much like video games. At the same time, many video games now incorporate gambling aspects, such as loot boxes.



As part of prevention efforts, providing education on college campuses was a focus this year. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, about 75 percent of college students gamble each year, and approximately 6 percent of college students have a serious gambling problem. Training was provided to Southern West Virginia Collegiate Peer Recovery Network so they could share prevention and treatment information with the campus community. A collaboration happened with the Psychology Department at Marshall University to hold a two-day event on campus about the dangers of problem gambling. Unfortunately, the event was canceled due to COVID-19.

Grants were awarded to the following organizations this year to assist with youth outreach and prevention work. Each of them received a full day of training on problem gambling and evidence-based practices to prevent youth gambling.

Brooke-Hancock Family Resource Network  
Calhoun Family Resource Network  
Clay Family Resource Network  
Gilmer Family Resource Network  
Partnership of African American Churches  
Pleasants Family Resource Network

Rainelle Medical Center  
So-Kai Unlimited  
Taylor Family Resource Network  
Williamson Health & Wellness Center  
Winfield Students Against Destructive Decisions

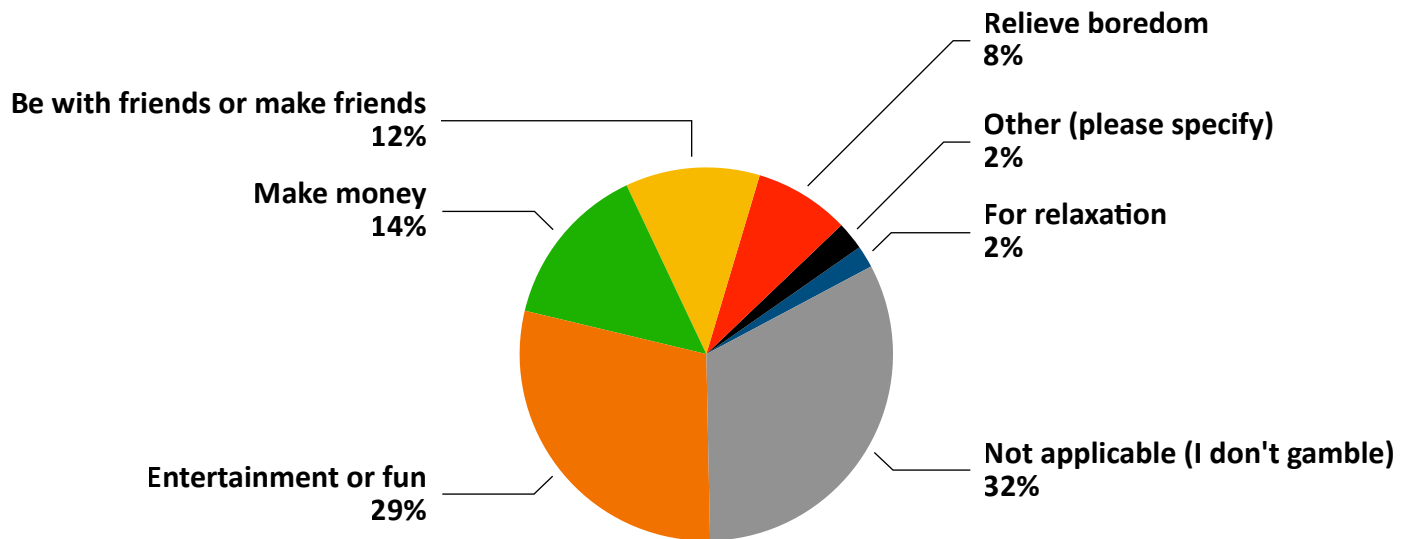


# Prevention

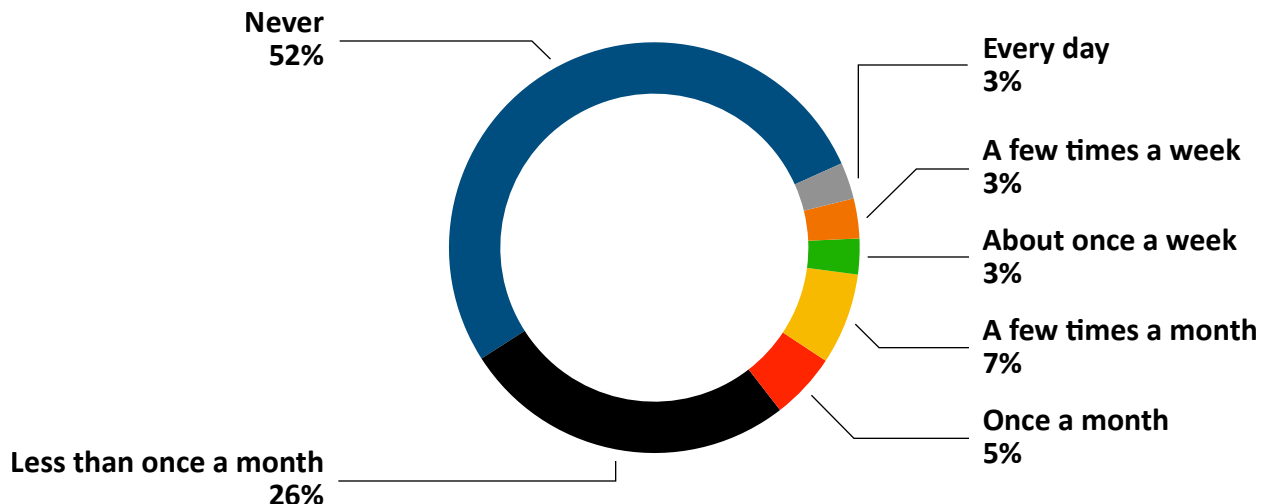
Prevention grantees specialize in community prevention, education, and student mentorship. They had a very productive year and were able to interact with thousands of students. Not only were they able to work directly with youth, but they also played a role in educating parents, community members, and other organizations about gambling addiction and prevention. Activities varied depending on each organization's strengths and community ties. This included conducting surveys with youth to measure their knowledge about and participation in gambling activities, teaching evidence-based curriculum about problem gambling, hosting "town hall" events, giving presentations, exhibiting at school functions, interacting with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapters, creating public service announcements contests, implementing social media campaigns, hosting outdoor activities for youth, speaking with local media about youth problem gambling, designing art night contests, and working directly with school staff. Most organizations agreed that before they received the grant and training from 1800GAMBLER, they were unaware about the risks of youth problem gambling.

The Youth Gambling Prevention Grantees surveyed over 1,500 West Virginia middle and high school students about their gambling activities and their attitude towards gambling.

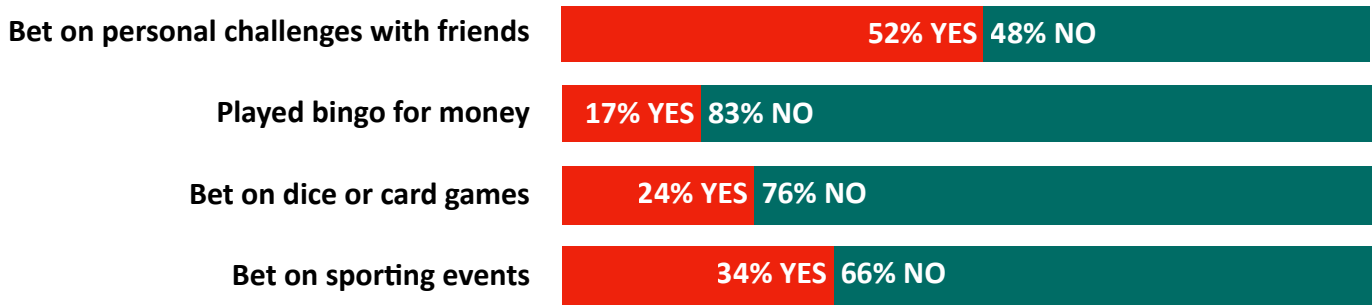
If you have ever bet money on anything, why did you do it?



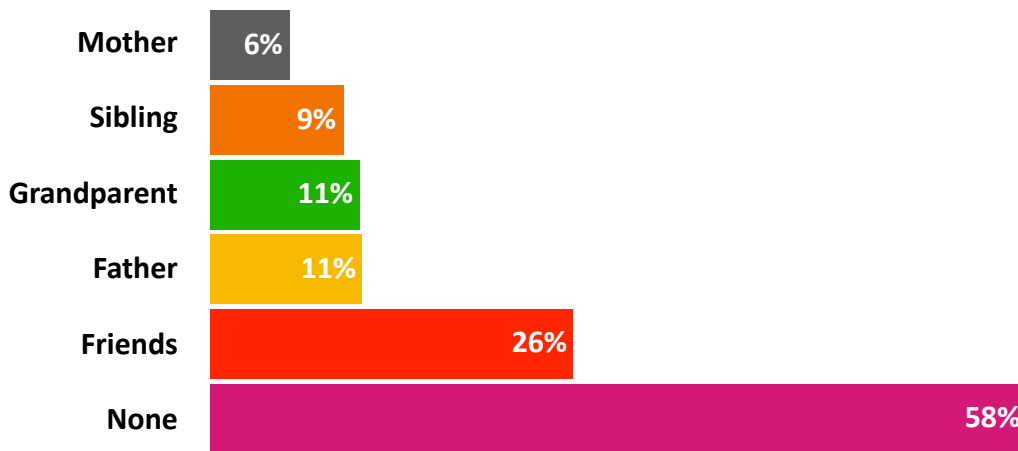
How often do you gamble?



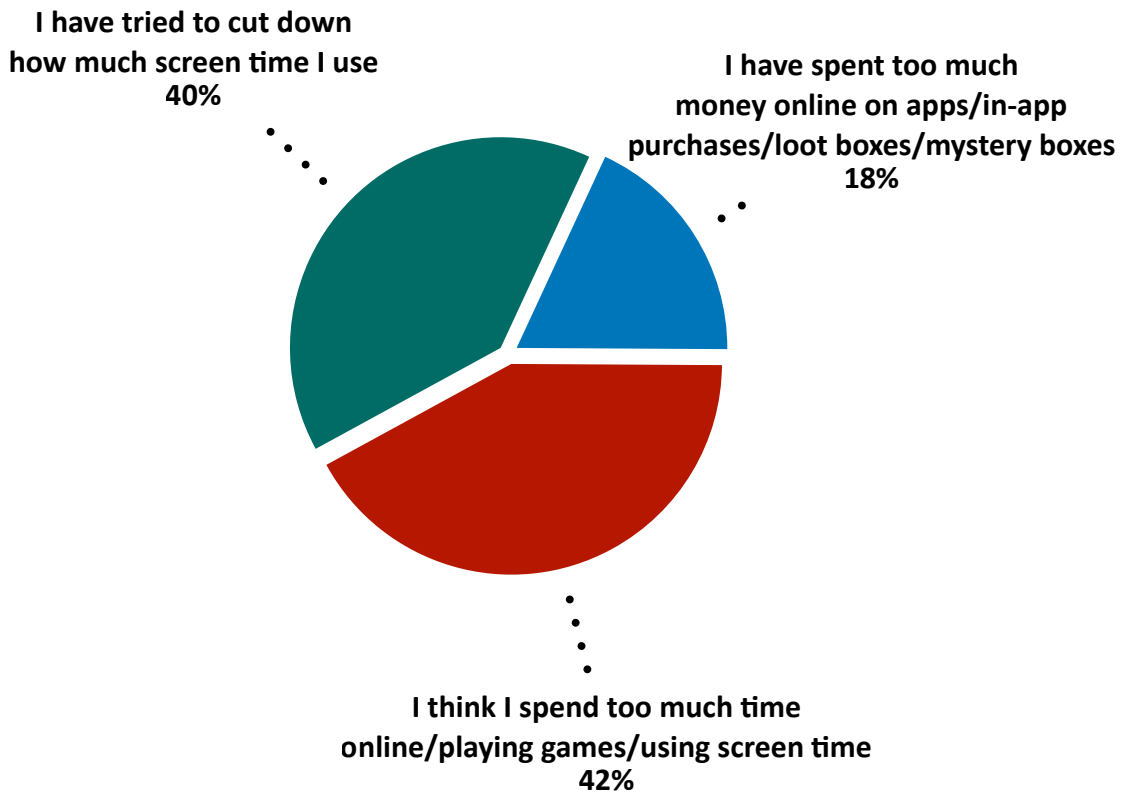
Have you participated in any of the following types of gambling?



Do any of the following people in your life gamble/bet for money on a regular basis?



Upon asking youth about their online activity:



# Weekend Retreat

In November 2019 a Weekend Retreat for 35 problem gamblers and their loved ones from around the state was held at Pipestem State Park. There were 16 sessions covering topics such as fighting the loneliness that often drives addiction, how to repair relationships damaged by problem gambling, how to prevent relapses, and how to maintain wellness. There were also support groups and individual counseling sessions. Pictured below are some of the staff members, network counselors and session leaders.



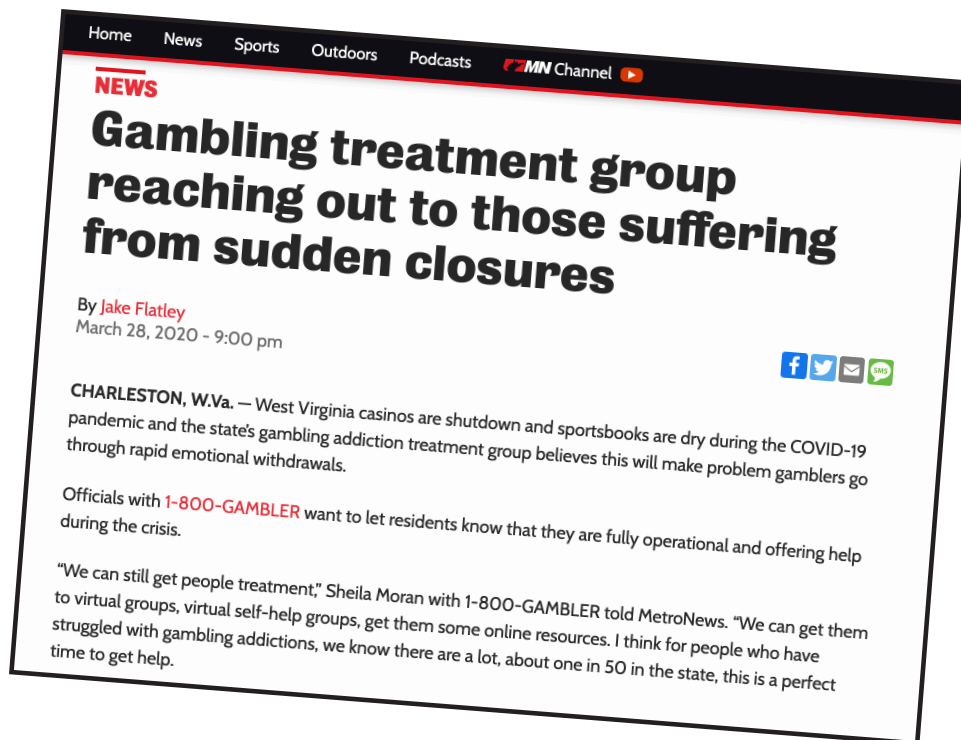


# The Impact of COVID-19

This picture of the Outreach Coordinator, Jeremy Smith, was taken at the West Virginia High School State Basketball Tournament. A booth at the event was sponsored to reach youth and raise awareness about the dangers of youth gambling.



Immediately after this photo was taken, Governor Jim Justice canceled the remainder of the event due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19. This was a major turning point for the program. Many gambling venues shut down and calls decreased dramatically for a few weeks. The program canceled media buys, presentations, counselor training, and a scheduled weekend retreat. When businesses began reopening in late May, record profits were recorded at the state's 7,000 video lottery terminals. Revenue was recorded at \$1.5 million per day, compared to the average of \$500,000 per day (MetroNews, June 24, 2020).



*It's the perfect time to get help!*

**DISTANCE  
COUNSELING  
AVAILABLE**

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The Problem Gamblers Help Network of West Virginia



To pivot the services during COVID-19, we:

- Increased the availability of telehealth treatment from the network counselors
- Arranged weekly “wellness calls” for the helpline callers
- Provided online training to the network counselors and the community
- Participated in online health fairs, which were often streamed on facebook live
- Bought ads in newspapers statewide to let potential callers know that the program was offering telehealth
- Issued press releases to let the public know the program was still functioning and to discuss new types of gambling people may be engaging in at home



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1-800-GAMBLER



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