

# Seniors can have problems with gambling

SAFE social worker Nicole Giordano visited the Glen Cove Senior Center on April 5 to share important information on the dangers of gambling such as when it is a problem, where help is available and the signs to recognize if it may become a problem. Giordano presented a workshop that included a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question and answer period toward the end of the program.

There are five different types of gamblers, Giordano said. These include the social gambler that engages in the activity for leisure, the problem gambler whose involvement is more excessive, a pathological gambler who has an uncontrollable response to gambling, the organized crime gambler that launders illegal funds through illegal resources and the professional gambler who does it for a living in a controlled fashion and can deal with their loses.

Aging adults engage in bingo at senior centers, which can be enjoyable. However, it can have dire consequences for someone with a gambling problem. Many seniors are limited financially, so they may see playing bingo or scratch-off lottery cards as a way to add to their income. And since retired seniors have more time on their hands, gambling can become an escape.

Seniors with a gambling problem will find that their mood is affected by their gain or loss when gambling. A problem gambler is willing to go without food and medication so they can gamble. They might even cash in their insurance policy.”

A senior with a gambling problem suffers the same consequences as their younger counterparts. Their family may not trust them anymore, as 20 percent of seniors with a gambling problem have filed for bankruptcy and 20 percent attempt or com-



**REPRESENTATIVES FROM SAFE** visited the Glen Cove Senior Center to educate seniors on the dangers of problem gambling. Courtesy SAFE

mit suicide. Additionally, cognitive impairment may prevent the recognition of a gambling problem, therefore seniors may not comprehend their addiction and may be reluctant to seek or accept help.

Giordano also went on to state that the American Psychiatric Association has finally acknowledged gambling as an addiction rather than an impulse disorder. This is because research demonstrates that problem gamblers and alcoholics or substance users share the same reward system stimuli in the brain.

To get further information or help with a gambling problem, call Gamblers Anonymous at (213) 386-8789 or visit [www.gamblersanonymous.com](http://www.gamblersanonymous.com).

## Signs of gambling problems

- Loss of interest and participation in normal activities with family and friends.
- Blocks of time unaccounted for and secrecy regarding that time when queried.
- Missing possessions or assets.
- Changes in attitude and personality.
- Neglect of personal needs.