

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE: March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Each year SAFE presents new information regarding the risk factors of problem gambling and provides resources for those who are seeking treatment for a gambling addiction. In collaboration with Christine Rice, Executive Director of the Glen Cove Senior Center and Eric Shuman, Activity Coordinator, a presentation was held on March 9th by SAFE Executive Director, Dr. Sharon Harris, to inform members of the Senior Center about this concerning issue-especially with youth.

This year's theme is "Caring Communities, Stronger Futures". With the continuous rise in online betting and in-your-face advertising, it is important to understand how to prevent this from happening to you, someone you care about or identify someone in need of support for their Gambling Disorder.

Gambling Addiction or Problem Gambling is known as the "hidden addiction" because there are no visible signs. Because of the lack of visibility, often those suffering from a gambling addiction can hide it longer than someone with an alcohol or drug problem. Usually, gambling addiction is discovered when there is a loss of accessibility to money and/or negative actions occur. Gambling is defined as the act of risking something of value (money, food, clothes, electronics, etc.) on a game of chance (bingo, lottery, dice, slot machine, sports, etc.) for the desired result.

Given the increase in technology, Internet Gambling aka "Gaming" has emerged, making it easier for individuals to gamble from the comfort of their homes. Gaming refers to playing electronic games, whether through consoles, computers, mobile phones or another medium. These devices have led the younger generation to gamble more frequently.

The internet has out-paced traditional gambling advertising and experiences via television, billboard advertisements for local casinos or horse betting. Internet Gambling is dangerous because it gives the player a decreased perception of money as time spent gambling increases.

39.5% of New York State youth between ages 12 and 17 have gambled in the past year playing the lottery, lotto and scratch offs, betting money on raffles or charity games, betting money on sports. 30% of youth stated that they began gambling at or before age 10. In NYS the legal age for gambling is 18 years old, and even some stores that sell liquor set their legal age to gamble at 21 years old. The NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) reported that 98% of online problem gambling sports bettors are male

and the average age of a Mobile Sports Better is 28- about 10 years younger than casual sports bettors, aged 38.

According to Governor Hocu, more than \$19 Billion wagered on mobile sports betting in NYS and generated 862 million over the last 2 years.

Youth are 2–4 times more likely to develop gambling addictions than adults due to an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, which impairs impulse control and risk assessment. Early exposure to gambling or "simulated gambling" in video games (e.g., loot boxes) can alter brain chemistry and reward processing, significantly increasing the risk of future addiction.

Dr. Harris discussed the warning signs of someone who has a problem with gambling or gaming, and how to prevent/ receive help for this growing addiction. Some warning signs that gambling might be a problem include: Thinking often about gambling; Covering up/lying about gambling behaviors; Missing time with friends and loved ones to gamble; Gambling to escape problems or negative feelings; Gambling more money than planned or can afford; Trying unsuccessfully to cut back or stop gambling.

For more information on Problem Gambling please visit: NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) Problem Gambling <https://oasas.ny.gov/problem-gambling>.

Long Island Problem Gambling Resource Center
<https://nyproblemgamblinghelp.org/long-island/>

SAFE is the only alcohol and substance use prevention, intervention and education agency in Glen Cove and seeks to prevent addiction. Please visit SAFE's Problem Gambling page at www.safeglencove.org to learn more about the dangers of gambling addiction.