

NEWS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Some Seniors Are Gambling More Than Money

(NAPSA)—There's good news for seniors who may have a gambling problem. A free national helpline offers information and resources. This is fortunate, because when it comes to gambling, the stakes for many seniors may be higher than they suspect.

The number of seniors who gamble has grown; in fact, seniors have become one of the fastest-growing groups of gamblers.

A recent study found that gambling is the most frequently identified social activity among adults over 65. Some gaming venues provide bus transportation, free or discounted meals, special rewards and other prizes that attract older individuals. Playing slot machines tends to be the type of gambling seniors prefer at casinos, but seniors may also be found at race-tracks, off-track betting parlors, bingo games or purchasing lotto tickets.

Gambling for many seniors is a social activity that affords them an opportunity for excitement in safe, friendly surroundings.

However, experts say that seniors are often more vulnerable to gambling problems for a variety of reasons. They may use the distraction of gambling to escape the loss of a spouse or a medical concern. The attention of the casino staff may temporarily reduce feelings of loneliness or depression. Some may have financial problems they are hoping to overcome.

Unfortunately, there are those who may have difficulty understanding that, for them, gambling may be a problem. They may be overspending and neglecting their



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nutrition, lack funds for medication and other medical needs or have less working years left to recoup the financial losses due to gambling. Other seniors may have limited finances and are looking for a "big win to set myself up for life."

It is not unusual for a senior with gambling concerns to not seek help, telling himself or herself "at my age, I should have known better," and to have embarrassment. Unfortunately, in some cases, things can spiral out of control rather quickly.

For example, one woman recently told experts that over a period of five and a half years, she had embezzled over a quarter of a million dollars. Being a grandmother didn't prevent her from being charged with five felony counts and serving just over a year in prison.

To learn more or to find help, call (800) 522-4700 toll free or visit www.ncpgambling.org.