



Help Available for Problem Gamblers as Casinos Reopen *Re-openings may trigger relapse*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 27, 2020

CONTACT: Lori Laughlin, Director of Marketing and Communications
(309) 820-3814 . lnlaughlin@chestnut.org

GRANITE CITY, IL – An estimated 125,000 Illinoisans struggle with a gambling problem. Stress and financial problems brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to add to these numbers as people try to recoup their losses.

The State of Illinois allowed casinos and video gaming locations to reopen on July 1. In addition, some professional sports are being played. The reopening can be risky – potentially triggering a relapse for those struggling with a gambling problem. In addition, forms of gambling still available during closures – including online gambling and State lotteries – may have caused people to struggle even during the pandemic.

Coping Strategies

Overcoming a gambling addiction first requires acknowledging that there is a problem. “That takes courage,” said Brent Cummins, clinical director for integrated addiction services. “Owning up to a gambling problem can be especially difficult if a person has lost a lot of money or if the addiction has damaged relationships.”

Self-help for gambling problems includes the following:

- Learning healthier ways to relieve stress and unpleasant feelings
- Building a strong support network
- Joining a peer support group such as Gamblers Anonymous
- Seeking help for underlying mood disorders like depression, anxiety, or substance use

Free or low-cost confidential help is available

Illinois has a 24-hour hotline that can be reached three ways:

- Phone: 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)
- Text: ILGAMB to 53342
- Chat: <https://weknowthefeeling.org/>

Chestnut Health Systems offers gambling addiction treatment from its Granite City, IL location. In the midst of COVID-19, virtual treatment is also available.

In addition, those struggling with gambling addiction may voluntarily exclude themselves from casino gambling and sports betting through the [Illinois Gaming Board](#).

Services are made possible by funding and support from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery.

Chestnut Health Systems is a non-profit organization that has cared since 1973 for persons needing behavioral health services. Chestnut provides substance use disorder treatment, mental health counseling, primary health care, credit counseling, and housing and supportive services. It is a leader in substance use-related research. More at www.chestnut.org.

-###-