



Amanda Jacinto
Public Information Officer
ajacinto@azgaming.gov
Direct 602.255.3806
Cell 480-403-1265

Douglas A. Ducey
Governor

Daniel H. Bergin
Director

Larissa T. Pixler
Program Director

News Release

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March Madness Craze could Pose Huge Risk for Problem Gamblers

PHOENIX– From now until April 4th many eyes will be on TV screens across the state as fans watch their favorite college basketball teams move bracket by bracket toward the championship.

“For those struggling with gambling addictions this constant chatter about betting on brackets and winning or losing, it can all be a trigger,” said Larissa Pixler, Program Director of the Office of Problem Gambling.

Those in recovery or even in the midst of a gambling addiction have plenty of opportunities during March Madness to relapse and potentially put them or their families in significant financial harm. That is why the Arizona Office of Problem Gambling is working to spread the word about their hotline 1-800-NEXT-STEP (1.800.639.8783).

Every month the hotline handles about 50 new calls from those struggling with a gambling addiction or concerned family members of someone with an addiction. The hotline offers confidentiality and connects callers with a licensed counselor who can get them in touch with available resources, including providers throughout the state that offer problem gambling counseling.

“In Arizona, sports betting is not legal however social gambling does permit small office pools involving March Madness brackets. Plus legal sports betting is only a short drive away in Nevada. There is no shortage of opportunities right now for a problem gambler,” said Pixler.

Even though sports betting is not legal in Arizona the Office of Problem Gambling’s hotline is there for anyone, or the family member of anyone, struggling with a gambling addiction. It does not matter if that addiction involves betting on basketball, scratcher tickets, slot machines or poker.

March is also national “Problem Gambling Awareness” month and helps to highlight the growing problem of gambling addiction. To learn more you can visit the Arizona Office of Problem Gambling website www.problemgambling.az.gov and follow us on Twitter @AzOPG

1110 W. Washington Street, Suite 450
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
www.problemgambling.az.gov
1-800-NEXT STEP