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## Gambling Gone Digital: The New Financial Frontier

Jody Bechtold, LCSW, ICGC-II, BACC  
March 6, 2026  
CCPG Statewide Conference - East

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Council on Compulsive Gambling of PA

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### JODY BECHTOLD

- Clinical Social Worker
  - ICGC-II & BACC
  - IGDC
- CEO, The Better Institute
  - President, International Problem Gambling and Gaming Certification Org (IPGGC)
  - Advisory Board Member, GamFin, Seagulls Flock, Upside
  - Member, National Council on Problem Gambling



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### Objectives

- Understand the unique financial challenges posed by online gambling.
- Identify the complexities of win/losses reporting in the digital age.
- Explore the implications of IRS involvement and third-party payment platforms.
- Discuss situations/strategies for addressing financial issues related to online gambling using GamFin Services.

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### The Changing Landscape of Gambling Finances

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## The Shift / Why Now?

- Traditional gambling to Online gambling
- Generational Characteristics (GenZs, Millennials, GenXers, Baby Boomers)




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## Financial Literacy

- The ability to use financial skills to make informed decisions about money. It involves understanding how to earn, spend, save, invest, and manage debt
- 1 in 3 teens don't know the difference between a credit card and debit card
- Lack of Financial Literacy creates insecurities, uncertainties, and anxieties related to financial decisions
  - Higher financial literacy, lower financial anxiety
  - Financial awareness is missing in most homes
  - Financial education is absent from most school systems

Reynal, V. (2025). Money on Your Mind: The Unconscious Beliefs That Sabotage Your Financial Well-Being and How to Break Free. The Experiment, LLC.

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## Financial Literacy and Gambling

Koomson et al [2022]:

- Problem gambling severity is positively associated with self-reported financial stress
- Males exhibit higher levels of problem gambling severity
- Females are more financially stressed
- Financial Literacy is known to have a direct negative relationship with problem gambling severity
- Overall, gambling is associated with greater financial stress and lower financial literacy

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## Gambling-related debt

Swanton, T. B. & Gainsbury, M. (2020):

- Consumer credit use and debt problems increase with problem gambling severity
- Gambling-related debt problems impacts poor psychosocial functioning, psychological stress, substance use, adverse family impacts, crime, and suicidality
- Consumer credit products have the potential to exacerbate gambling-related harms

## Suicide and Gambling Research

Marionneau, V., & Nikkinen, J. (2022):

- Connection between suicidal behavior/suicide and gambling
  - Indebtedness and money loss
    - Heavy debts (suicide is the only solution)
    - Illegal gambling debts (threats)
  - Shame & Guilt
    - Excessive gambling and gambling losses
    - Means to escape the difficult feelings and desperate situation

## Reports & Reporting

- Win/Loss reports
- Session reporting
- W-2Gs & Big Wins/Jackpots

IRS

- "Unreported" income letters
- Third-Party Payments (Venmo, PayPal, CashApp)

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Case Studies

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Meet "Pat"

- Long time sports bettor
- Sole provider for family of 6
- Business Development / Sales
- Chronic relapses (every 18-20 months)
- Pressure Relief with GA (twice)
- IRS issues - ongoing

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Retirement Status

- Gambling debt = credit card debt
- TIAA-Pension
- Annuity #1
- Annuity #2
- IRA
- Inheritance (sale of family land)

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Bankruptcy

- Accumulated debt in just 4 months
- Already working with bankruptcy attorney when starting therapy
- Partner/Spouse impacted/not impacted

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Strategies for  
Clinical  
Setting

"It's a money problem,  
not a gambling problem"



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Strategies

- Financial Budgeting
- Debt management vs Restitution
- Financial Literacy / Healthier relationship with money
- Addressing shame, guilt and stigma
- **When to consult with GamFin Services and what to expect**

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Refer to GamFin  
Attend GamFin session(s)

Two Paths

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## Refer to/from GamFin

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## How to work with GamFin

- Client connects with a GamFin Financial Counselor
  - Before or during gambling counseling
  - Consents and ROIs
  - Email updates
- More likely to listen to a financial professional ("street cred")
  - Budgeting and restitution
- No selling with GamFin
- Transforms the "old" referral system where you don't know what happened/what was said/next steps

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## Attend a GamFin session

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Yes YOU!

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## The Financial Team

- Why consider GamFin for your client
  - Stay within area of Competence
  - Complexities
- You & Your Client **learn together**
- Reinforce recovery concepts (no bailouts)
- Process the feelings (Feel the FEELS)
- Attend some or all GamFin sessions

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## Case Studies - revisited

- "Pat"
- IRS letters
- Retirement Solutions
- Dealing with Bankruptcy
- Other solutions

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