

Recognizing a Hidden Risk Among Our Veterans

Veterans Day is recognized nationwide to honor the millions of veterans who have served. Between relatives, friends, coworkers, and neighbors, nearly everyone knows at least one person who has served in the military.

Veterans Day is a time to reflect on the unique challenges faced by service members. It is also an opportunity to create better systems of support for those who've served. Recent research by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and Bowling Green State University has indicated that problem gambling is 3.5 times higher among active military personnel compared to the general population.

Life for military members is different than civilian life. Without close family and friends, or regular forms of entertainment, military members can turn to gambling to pass time, escape stress and cope with emotions. Opportunities to gamble are vast, especially on base and overseas. On base slot machines, friendly sports wagers, and simple card games can serve as recreation, but can quickly spiral out of control.

Most adults can gamble safely, without developing a problem. But when gambling or betting activities start to interfere with morale, individual readiness, relationships, create financial troubles, contribute to depression and anxiety, or lead to feelings of hopelessness, it's time to seek assistance.

Research shows that active-duty service members seek help for problem gambling at significantly lower rates than the civilian population, often out of fear of facing negative consequences on their military career.

The New York Council on Problem Gambling (NYCPG) operates seven regional Problem Gambling Resource Centers (PGRC) across the state. Together these centers work in partnership with the NYCPG Veteran Outreach Coordinator. Through education, outreach, and connection to care NYCPG seeks to remove barriers and end stigma around Gambling Addiction.

If you or someone you care about is struggling with problem gambling, reach out to your nearest PGRC for resources, guidance, and confidential support. www.NYProblemGamblingHELP.org

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NYCPG is a not-for-profit independent corporation dedicated to increasing public awareness about problem and disordered gambling and advocating for support services and treatment for persons adversely affected by problem gambling. NYCPG maintains a neutral stance on gambling and is governed by a Board of Directors.