

INTERIM ISSUE BRIEF TITLE:

Compulsive Gambling Programs for College Student Athletes and Military Veterans

DATE DUE: September 1, 2011

PROJECT NUMBER: 2012-221

ISSUE DESCRIPTION and BACKGROUND:

Senator Hill requested that Senate professional staff of the Regulated Industries Committee review the compulsive gambling programs available for college student athletes and Florida military veterans. The primary organization that is involved in addressing compulsive gambling in Florida is the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. The council is a not-for-profit organization under 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) that provides information, resource referrals, and support services for problem gamblers, their families, employers and others. It also offers prevention and education programs, as well as professional training for mental health, addiction and medical practitioners, gambling operators, governments, businesses, academia, law enforcement authorities, faith based organizations, and others.

Senator Jones, the Chair of the Senate Regulated Industries Committee requested the council to make a presentation on its programs before the committee during the 2011 Regular Legislative Session. Senator Hill requested this interim study in response to the council's presentation and responses to the Senator's inquiries regarding programs for both college student athletes and military veterans.

In response to Senator Hill's questions, the council indicated that it has worked with the Florida High School Coaches Association to address compulsive gambling in the student athlete population and it has found some coaches very supportive of its program and some coaches not receptive at all. The council has wanted to implement a compulsive gambling program across the state, but was not successful. The council noted an example of a high school athlete that was both Florida Mr. Football and Mr. Basketball in the same year and apparently had a gambling problem in high school that was not addressed. When he attended a state university, the athlete's problem gambling became excessive and resulted in him losing his scholarship and ruining a promising athletic career. According to the council, student athletes, because of their competitive nature are at high risk to become problem gamblers.

In addition, the council has tried to penetrate the needs of the veterans' population. The need has been identified by research and calls to the council's hotline, but coordination and support with different segments at the state level has been unsuccessful. It has also been a problem with access to the organizations that serve the veterans. The highest level of prevalence for gambling was for the veteran population according to 2001 Statewide Prevalence Study.

OBJECTIVE:

To ascertain what compulsive gambling programs, if any, are available to college student athletes and military veterans in the State of Florida.

METHODOLOGY:

Senate professional staff will conduct research regarding the status of compulsive gambling in the college student athlete and veteran population. Staff will review programs and referrals provided by the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, as well as other studies and reports prepared in other states to ascertain the extent of the problem and any compulsive gambling programs available. The National Collegiate Athletic Association and the major institutions with collegiate sports programs will be

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contacted regarding what programs have been developed by these entities. Veterans' groups as well as state and federal agencies will be contacted to ascertain if any programs have been developed for military veterans regarding compulsive gambling, including to what extent compulsive gambling is a problem in the veteran population.