Recovery Works!

The mission of Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services is to ensure that quality alcohol and other drug intervention and treatment, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention programs are provided for citizens in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) is a nationwide grassroots campaign. Held annually in March, PGAM seeks to increase public awareness of problem gambling and promote prevention, treatment, and recovery services. This year’s theme, “Every Story Matters,” is a reminder that every narrative, battle, and triumph related to problem gambling is significant. Together, let’s amplify awareness, break down stigmas, and emphasize that when it comes to problem gambling, Every Story Matters.

Learn More About PGAM

PGAM Events Calendar
Attend a Training:

**Current Trends in Gambling in Chester County**
March 11th, 2024
9:00AM - 11:00AM
Government Services Center
601 Westtown Road, West Chester, PA 19382

**Sports Gambling & Daily Fantasy Sports in Chester County**
March 15th, 2024
9:00AM - 11:00AM
Government Services Center
601 Westtown Road, West Chester, PA 19382

**Problem Gambling in an Aging Population**
March 18th, 2024
12:00PM - 1:00PM
Virtual Event

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**Save the Date:**
**March 12th is Gambling Disorder Screening Day**

This year, Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services is encouraging community members and organizations to screen for a gambling disorder. We are providing a free 4 question survey to help you identify if you need to reevaluate your relationship with gambling. Brief screens can help people decide whether to seek a formal evaluation of their gambling behavior. The screening tool is based on the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) criteria for Gambling Disorder.

**Why screen for problem gambling?**
- Can lead to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms.
- Affects about 1% of the general population, with the majority going undiagnosed.
- As much as 10% of primary care patients report lifetime Gambling Disorder.
- People with gambling-related problems are more likely to smoke, consume excessive amounts of caffeine, have more emergency department visits, and be obese.
- Many cases of Gambling Disorder go undetected, due to limited assessment for this problem.

**Who should screen?**
- Addiction service providers
- Mental health service providers
- Physicians
- Gerontologists
- Educators
- Youth community leaders
- Employee Assistance Plan service providers
- Veterans groups

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**Take the Gambling Screen**
Interested in promoting Gambling Disorder Screening Day?
Learn about different ways to get involved here.

**Recovery is Possible.**  
**Help is Available.**

There is help available, and recovery is possible. Chester County has a free, 24-hour helpline, support groups for individuals and loved ones struggling with a gambling addiction, and resources available.

- Find a meeting
- Access 1-800-GAMBLER, the 24hr hotline available via phone, text, and chat
- Access 988, the 24hr crisis hotline available via phone, text, and chat
- What is Gambling Disorder?
- Warning Signs of a Gambling Disorder
- Gam-Anon

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**March 18th-24th is National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week**

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week (NDAFW) is an annual health observance that inspires dialogue about the science of drug use and addiction among youth. It provides an opportunity to bring together scientists, students, educators, healthcare providers, and community partners to help advance the science and address youth drug and alcohol use in communities and nationwide. It was launched in 2010 by scientists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to stimulate educational events in communities so teens can learn what science has taught us about drug use and addiction.

Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services encourages you to participate, whether that's attending an event, sharing our myth busters around marijuana, asking youth about their perceptions around substances, or taking the quiz below to see how your knowledge stacks up. Everyone can have an impact on shattering the myths and raising awareness about the risks of substance use.

**Get Involved**

- Attend an event
- Test your knowledge
- Check out NIDA's activity ideas
- Share Holcomb's Blunt Truth Stall Story
- Share our myth busters around marijuana
Common Myths about Marijuana & Your Health

**MYTH:** “It helps my anxiety.”

**FACT:** Studies show there is no benefit to using marijuana to treat anxiety. In fact, it can worsen existing mental health conditions and raise the risk of a psychotic or mental health disorder. Marijuana activates the reward system and provides temporary relief without addressing the root cause of the anxiety. Developing coping strategies and ways to get support can help with managing anxiety.

**MYTH:** “It helps me sleep.”

**FACT:** While there may be anecdotal self-reports that marijuana helps with sleep, research shows that it worsens the quality of sleep. Consistent use led to individuals being significantly more likely to over- or under-sleep. Not getting the proper amount of sleep has been linked to a number of different chronic health issues. Youth need education on proper sleep hygiene and should consider what the underlying cause is to their sleep problem instead of relying on substances to mask the problem.

**MYTH:** “It is safer than other drugs.”

**FACT:** Although many think that marijuana is safe because it comes from a plant, it has become highly manufactured to increase THC potency, leading to increased rates of dependency. As a result, some people experience withdrawal symptoms like sweats, stomach pain, anxiety, and depression. Studies have shown other negative health consequences, such as high rates of emphysema and breathing ailments and having heavy amounts of tar in the lungs. When purchasing illegally, there are also concerns with fentanyl, as more incidents of marijuana being laced with fentanyl are being reported.

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Information Opportunity

Did you know...

There are several other county departments who send out community newsletters and announcements just like this one. If you're interested, sign up [here](#).

If you would like your information included in our newsletters, please contact Laura Wiechecki at lwiechecki@chesco.org

The next newsletter will be released in April.