

Renz Center to offer free tests to help root out gambling addictions

From teens to retired seniors, Americans spend more on gambling than all other recreation combined. No longer confined to Las Vegas and Atlantic City, gambling is everywhere, including the Internet, state lotteries, race tracks, sporting events and slot machines in convenience stores. And while it's important to recognize that most people can gamble without negative consequences, a percentage of people who gamble suffer enormous social, economic and psychological implications.

In recognition of National Problem Gambling Awareness Week on March 1-7, Renz Addiction Counseling Center will offer free gambling assessment screenings from 1 to 3 p.m. Wednesday, March 4, at Two American Way, Elgin.

"We offer the free assessments because many times early gambling symptoms are not always easily recognizable," said Renz Center's gambling counselor Patti Anderson.

"Many times people are in self-denial about their gambling problem until their addiction compromises their personal, family and career pursuits."

Signs and symptoms of problem gambling include:

- Gambling to calm nerves, forget worries, or reduce depression.
- Constantly talking and/or thinking about gambling, and avoiding other activities.
- Lying about gambling habits.
- Gambling alone or gambling more often.
- Getting into arguments about gambling.
- Going without basic needs in order to gamble.
- Needing to gamble more and more money in order to get the desired effect.
- Experiencing health problems related to gambling like anxiety and depression.
- Having financial problems caused by gambling.

"During this difficult economy, people often turn to gambling as a way to make

easy money," said Renz Center's executive director Jerry Skogmo. "The truth is the only people making money are the gambling establishments themselves. They are in the business to make money, not give it away."

Renz Center provides a continuum of care dedicated to the prevention, intervention and treatment of addictive behaviors related to alcohol, drugs, and gambling. Services range from prevention programs for youth in the schools to outpatient treatment programs for adolescents and adults. Offices are located in Elgin, St. Charles, and Streamwood.

Renz Addiction Counseling Center is a nonprofit organization funded in part by the Federal Government, local United Ways, the Illinois Department of Human Services, Hanover Township and St. Charles, Geneva and Schaumburg 708 boards and other local community organizations. To find out more, call (847) 742-3545 or visit renzcenter.com.