



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

March 3, 2006

CONTACT: Leslie Ridgeway (619) 685-2239

COUNTY URGES ATTENTION TO PROBLEM GAMBLING

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week is March 6 - 12

During National Problem Gambling Awareness Week, March 6 – 12, the County of San Diego is joining with agencies across the country to educate the public on the impact of problem gambling and to raise awareness that help is available.

Problem gambling is a growing concern. Since 1996, the number of local Gamblers Anonymous meetings has almost tripled to 35 per week. In 2004, 501 callers from San Diego area codes called the California Council on Problem Gambling helpline for assistance. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency is partnering with local agencies to expand available resources to meet the increasing need for prevention and treatment services.

Although a small percentage seek help, many people with gambling problems don't realize they have a problem and continue to gamble to make up for their monetary losses. It is a vicious cycle which can lead to divorce, bankruptcy and even suicide. Warning signs of problem gambling include:

- Preoccupation with gambling and inability to stop;
- Borrowing money for gambling;
- Gambling to win back what you've lost;
- Lying to hide time spent gambling or to hide unpaid debts;
- Losing work time because of gambling; and
- Jeopardizing a significant relationship or job by gambling.

The National Problem Gambling Helpline offers free confidential advice and treatment information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-522-4700. For fact sheets and tips on problem gambling, visit www.npgaw.org or call the County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Alcohol and Drug Services at (619) 584-5007.

###