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UCLA, California partner on new publicly funded program to treat state's problem gamblers

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Gambling addiction is a mental health condition that affects roughly one out of every 25 California residents. Besides ruining people's lives, the addiction exacts a huge cost on families, communities and society, estimated at nearly $1 billion each year.

Yet until now, there have been no publicly funded treatment programs in the state for problem gamblers and their families.

In direct response to this need, the UCLA Gambling Studies Program and the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Program's Office of Problem Gambling have partnered to design, deliver and evaluate a statewide, publicly funded treatment program. The California Problem Gambling Treatment Services Program (CPGTSP) will offer free, evidenced-based treatment to residents of California who have been harmed by the consequences of problem gambling.

The program will consist of six separate and unique treatment components, ranging from outpatient and residential treatment to brief interventions and training for licensed health providers on treating problem gamblers.

In addition, the program's clinical innovations component, operated by the UCLA Gambling Studies Program, will develop and test new ways of treating problem gamblers.

"This is a collaborative effort between the state of California and a major research institution to develop evidence-based methods to address gambling addiction," said Timothy Fong, co-director of the Gambling Studies Program and a UCLA associate professor of psychiatry.

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The UCLA Gambling Studies Program is now enrolling California residents who are seeking help to manage their gambling problems. This project is free to those who are eligible; participants who complete the program will also receive compensation.

To find out more about the new treatment program, contact the UCLA Gambling Studies Program at 310-825-4845 or uclagamblingprogram@mednet.ucla.edu.

The UCLA Gambling Studies Program is devoted to understanding pathological gambling, its causes, natural history, cultural factors, and the obstacles to successful treatment. It is part of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, an interdisciplinary research and education institute devoted to the understanding of complex human behavior, including the genetic, biological, behavioral and sociocultural underpinnings of normal behavior, and the causes and consequences of neuropsychiatric disorders.

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