

# Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

## **Glenn's Gamble** **A Marine's Battle for Gambling Addiction Recovery**

A decorated and dedicated Marine deployed in middle-east danger zones, Glenn finds his life spiraling out of control when he develops a gambling problem and starts engaging in illegal activities to get money for gambling. With overwhelming financial and legal problems, he loses his security clearance and is subsequently court martialed resulting in incarceration. Losing his career, family and friends, at times he's homeless, living on the street. Glenn's Gambling: A Marine's Battle for Gambling Addiction Recovery follows Glenn as he channels his forceful Marine determination and strength towards treatment and recovery.

Currently, the military operates over 3000 slot machines on overseas bases in 12 countries. Over \$1 billion is played annually on these machines by active duty service members generating over \$100 million each year in revenue to the military. In spite of this, there has been little to no attention paid to the screening, assessment and treatment of gambling disorder among active duty service members or veterans.

After an intensive and comprehensive national study of how gambling disorder is addressed within the Department of Defense and Coast Guard, the Government Accountability Office issued a report on January 31, 2017 (GAO Report 17-114: DoD and the Coast Guard Need to Screen for Gambling Disorder Addiction and Update Guidance). This study found that large-scale, worldwide health studies of military personnel showed lifetime rates of gambling problems that were at least 2 times higher than civilian populations.

This report also stated that problem gambling among active duty service members resulting in a preoccupation with gambling, financial hardship and increased risk of suicide can pose a risk to individual readiness. Research has reported that 20 veterans per day commit suicide and the suicide rate for veterans is 50% higher than the non-veteran population. Research done on veterans with gambling disorder has reported that 40% of veterans seeking treatment for a gambling disorder have made a suicide attempt. The GAO report strongly recommended that all branches of the military and coast guard actively screen for gambling problems, include gambling disorder in their treatment manuals, and develop effective screen tools and strategies for gambling disorder. However, currently little has been done within the DoD or Department of Veterans Affairs to implement these recommendations in a comprehensive manner.

**HELPLINE: 1-800-GAMBLER**  
**[www.militarygamblesafe.org](http://www.militarygamblesafe.org)**

# **Glenn's Gamble: A Marine's Battle for Gambling Addiction Recovery**

## **Questions and Discussion Guide**

1. What basic human needs did gambling meet for Glenn?
2. How can gambling help those in active duty cope with the challenges of military life?
3. What internal and external challenges did Glenn have to face in his recovery journey?
4. What could the Marine Corp have done to address Glenn's gambling in a more therapeutic manner?
5. What are some key elements in Glenn's recovery process?
6. What are factors in military culture that may contribute to increased risk for problem gambling?
7. How might the transition from active duty to civilian life increase risk for problem gambling?
8. What does Glenn describe as a key factor in his decision to reach out for help? How can this inform effective intervention for veterans who struggle with gambling problems?
9. How has Glenn's relationship with Amy supported his recovery?
10. What ongoing work and challenges do Glenn and Amy need to focus on in their continuing recovery?
11. How can Glenn and Amy's story support your work and/or your recovery?

