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Contact:

Valerie Corr

Jasculca/Terman and Associates

312/573-5452

**Public health programs best approach to curb problem gambling,
according to Harvard Medical School addictions expert**

Illinois casino industry co-sponsors responsible gaming lecture

CHICAGO—The Illinois Casino Gaming Association (ICGA), the Illinois Coalition to Curb Problem Gambling and the American Gaming Association today jointly sponsored a responsible gaming lecture. The lecture, “A Public Health Perspective on Gambling,” was presented by Howard J. Shaffer, Ph.D., director of Harvard Medical School’s Division on Addictions.

“Although research has demonstrated that the vast majority of the millions of people who visit casinos do so responsibly and for entertainment, the Illinois gaming industry takes problem gaming very seriously,” said Tom Swoik, ICGA executive director. “We have invited Dr. Shaffer to Chicago because he is a nationally recognized expert on addictions and has authored several studies and publications on the issue of problem gaming.”

“As the popularity of legalized gambling continues to grow, society is directing more attention to the economic, legal and social ramifications of expanded gaming,” said Dr. Shaffer. “Recently, there has been rapidly growing interest in viewing gambling from a public health perspective.”

Dr. Shaffer’s lecture presented a review of the evidence about the effects of gambling, including costs and benefits, as well as goals for enhancing public health, such as prevention of gambling-related problems through public awareness, early identification, and provision of treatment; promotion of informed and balanced attitudes towards gamblers and gambling; and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Following his lecture, Dr. Shaffer also presented his findings to the Illinois Gaming Board at its regularly scheduled board meeting.

In addition to serving as the director of Harvard’s Division on Addiction, Dr. Shaffer is an associate professor at Harvard Medical School. He is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice and consults with a variety of international business, education, human services and government organizations. Dr. Shaffer is the editor of the *Journal of Gambling Studies* and the creator and founder of the *Weekly Addiction Gambling Education Report (WAGER)*. He has authored or co-authored many publications, including *Compulsive Gambling: Theory, Research and Practice* and the soon-to-be-released *Youth, Gambling and Society: Futures at Stake*.

ICGA has implemented and contributed to a variety of responsible gaming programs, including 1-800-GAMBLER, a help line/referral service funded 100 percent by ICGA; The

Outreach Foundation, which provides education about responsible gaming and assistance to those affected by problem gaming; the Illinois Coalition to Curb Problem Gambling; employee training; and self-exclusion programs for problem gamblers.

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