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Saturday evening hours including live chat added for problem gamblers

Norwich - To help people struggling with problem gambling at a time when they might be most vulnerable, United Community and Family Services has launched a Saturday evening online gambling chat.

"It's just another way for people to reach out if they have any concerns about gambling, and feel uncomfortable calling us or coming in," Fiorigio (Fred) Fetta, supervisor of UCFS' Bettor Choice program, said Wednesday.

Those who access the chat from 9 to 11 p.m. on Saturdays can pose questions anonymously to a counselor, Fetta said. The Saturday hours were first offered July 5 as an expansion to the 2-year-old live chat, which has been offering sessions from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays and 2 to 3:30 p.m. on Fridays. The next Saturday evening session is scheduled for July 19.

Most people who use the chat, Fetta said, recognize they have a problem but are unsure about how to get help. Counselors may encourage people to make an appointment at UCFS but will offer advice and listen to concerns regardless of people's willingness to take the next step, he said.

The UCFS chat is one of two in the state for problem gamblers, he said. The other is offered by the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling.

The UCFS chat is located at www.ucfs.org, scroll down and click on "Gambling - The Bettor Choice." During chatting hours, visitors should click: "Online. Click here to enter."

The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling's Helpline Chat can be found at www.problemgambling.org under the "Getting Help" tab on the home page. The Problem Gambling Helpline can be reached by phone around the clock at (888) 789-7777 or by texting (847) 973-5685.
