

Problem Gambling FAQ

The information here is to help you out as you plan your talks and discussions regarding problem gambling. This is not designed as a handout; use this to guide your work around Problem Gambling.

What is Problem Gambling?

It is gambling behavior that causes disruption in any are of person's life--psychological, physical, social or vocational.

Generally when you hear the term "problem gambling" it can include pathological or compulsive gambling... it basically is referring to any gambling that has had a negative impact the gambler. Problem gambling is an addiction; it is progress and is characterized by increasing preoccupations with gambling, a need to bet more money, betting more frequently, becoming restless or irritability when attempting to stop, the gambler chases their losses and there is a loss of control—the gambler continues their gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. It is estimated that as many as 4 percent of all gamblers may develop a gambling problem.

How widespread is problem gambling in the U.S.?

2 million (1%) of U.S. adults are estimated to meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered problem gamblers; that is, they do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling, but meet one or more of the criteria and are experiencing problems due to their gambling behavior. Research also indicates that most adults who choose to gamble are able to do responsibly.

How widespread is gambling in the U.S.?

Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives; 60% in the past year. Some form of legalized gambling is available in 48 states plus the District of Columbia. The two without legalized gambling are Hawaii and Utah.

What types of gambling cause the most problem gambling?

Again, the cause of a gambling problem is the individual's inability to control the gambling. Therefore, any type of gambling can become problematic, just as an alcoholic can get drunk on any type of alcohol. But some types of gambling have different characteristics that may exacerbate gambling problems. While these factors are still poorly understood, anecdotal reports indicate that one risk factor may be a fast speed of play. In other words, the faster the wager to response time with a game, the more likely players may be to develop problems with a particular game.

We don't have a casino, so why should we focus on Problem Gambling?

Gambling is present in every community in Indiana. Gambling is not just going to a casino and pulling the lever on a slot machine. You can gamble almost anywhere. About 85% of the adult US population has engaged in some form of gambling at least once in their life, with 60% of the population gambling in the last year. Only 2 states do not have some form of legal gambling...Utah and Hawaii.

Here are just a few types of gambling:

- ❖ Casino Gambling
- ❖ Bingo for money
- ❖ Cards for money
- ❖ Pull Tabs at Bars
- ❖ Lottery Tickets
- ❖ Internet Gambling Sites
- ❖ Betting on Sporting Events

Some of these are legal and others are not without the proper licenses or certificates.

Any of these forms of gambling can become a problem for someone. It is the thrill of the unknown and the placing of the bet that entices people to enjoy these activities, for some the fun moves toward the need to feel that thrill over and over again. Just like with substance abuse, it can often take more and more of the drug (gambling, placing a bet) for the person to feel the same high. This need for more and more is when gambling moves from fun and recreation to addiction and problems.

How can I tell if gambling is a problem?

You can ask yourself these questions...

Do you think you are playing too often or too long?

Do you lose money that you cannot afford to lose?

Do you lie or hid how much you gamble?

Do friends or family tell you that your gambling is an issue?

Do you feel guilty or bad about how much you spend on gambling?

Do you think just one more bet and all will be better?

If you answer yes, you need to get more facts.

You can call _____ (insert your agency name) or call the toll free helpline at 1-800-994-8448.

There is no drug or substance how can the person become addicted?

A problem gambler gets the same effect that a person might get from taking a tranquilizer or a drink. Their mood is altered; they can feel excitement and happiness. They repeat the gambling behavior over time to get the same effect, as with drugs and alcohol, a tolerance can develop and it takes more and more of the behavior to achieve the same effect. The gambler increasingly craves the feeling that they get from gambling, as the intensity of the craving grows the frequency and intensity of the gambling behavior grows.

How much money does one have to bet to be considered a problem gambler?

There is no set amount. A multi-million dollar athlete can bet much more than an hourly worker at the gas station. It is not the amount bet, but the impact of the gambling on the person that is the issue.

Is there a typical problem gambler?

No, anyone can become a problem gambler. Problems occur about equally between men and women. Young adults are as likely as older adults to have a problem. When the gambling interferes with the person's life it is a problem.

About 2 million (or 1%) of the US adult population currently meets the criteria for pathological gambling, with another 4-6 million considered to be at the problem gambling level. All of these gamblers have begun to experience negative impacts on their lives as a result of their gambling.

In Indiana, treatment services are available to those who are considered either problem or pathological gamblers. At _____ (insert your agency name), we offer services for problem and pathological gambling. There is no income threshold to receive these services. We will provide treatment support no matter how little or how much money you make.

Isn't problem gambling really the result of irresponsible or weak-willed people?

No. Many people who develop problems have been viewed as responsible and strong by those who care about them. Precipitating factors often lead to a change in behavior, such as retirement or job related stress.

Isn't problem gambling just a financial problem?

No. Problem gambling is an emotional problem that has financial consequences. If you pay all of a problem gambler's debts, the person will still be a problem gambler. The real problem is that they have an uncontrollable obsession with gambling.

Do only certain people become problem gamblers?

No. Anyone can develop problems. It is important to be aware of the risks and try to always gamble responsibly. When gambling interferes with life...including finances, relationships and the workplace, a serious problem exists.

Can you be a problem gambler if you don't gamble every day?

Yes, it is not how often, it is whether it causes problems.

Is there a toll free number for help?

Yes. 1-800-994-8448