



# Problem Gambling: What You Should Know

(NAPS)—Americans spend more on gambling than all other recreation combined. For most, it’s a fun diversion but for a few, gambling can become a serious, life altering problem. Problem gambling is behavior that causes disruptions in any major area of a person’s life. It affects as many as six to nine million Americans. Would you recognize a gambling problem in someone you know? It may be easier if you know the signs. Here are some questions from the National Council on Problem Gambling. If you or someone you know answers yes to any of the following questions, it is likely that gambling has become problematic.

- 1) Have you gambled until your last dollar is gone?
- 2) Have you often gambled longer than you had planned?
- 3) Have you lied about your gambling to friends or family?
- 4) Have you used your income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid?
- 5) Have you made repeated attempts to stop gambling?
- 6) Have you broken the law or considered breaking the law to get money to gamble?
- 7) Have you borrowed money to finance your gambling?
- 8) Have you felt depressed or suicidal because of your gambling losses?
- 9) Have you been remorseful after gambling?
- 10) Have you gambled to try to get money to meet your financial obligations?

Approximately 333,000 of Wisconsin residents are problem gamblers. Not only does compulsive gambling shatter the lives of these men and women and their families, it results in economic loss to society. It is called the “hidden illness” since there is neither breath odor nor stumbling of steps or speech. Nonetheless, it is as debilitating as an alcohol or drug addiction.

There is hope for recovery. Compulsive gambling can be diagnosed and is a treatable illness.

“Problem gambling is not a bad habit or a moral weakness. It’s a serious condition that responds well to treatment,” explains Keith Whyte, executive director at the National Council on Problem Gambling. Whyte says that anyone can develop a problem with gambling. It can affect men or women of any age, race or religion, regardless of their social status. Some risk factors, individually or in combination, might make a person more vulnerable:

- A stressful life event such as the death of a loved one, divorce, job loss, injury/disability
- An early big win
- Pre-existing mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, alcoholism
- Family history of addictions such as alcoholism, compulsive gambling and drug addiction.

There is hope and help for problem gamblers and their loved ones—and many people who seek help do recover.

**If you or someone you know has a gambling problem call:**

**1-800-GAMBLE-5**