

# March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

## Why is Problem Gambling Awareness Month Important?

Most adults gamble, and therefore would benefit from programs to prevent gambling addiction. March has become one of the biggest gambling occasions because of the popularity of the NCAA “March Madness” Basketball Tournament. Between six and nine million people meet criteria for gambling problems, yet only a fraction seek help. We believe many who suffer in silence do so because they don’t know they developed a problem, what gambling addiction is, or where to get help.

## Have the Conversation about Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling is a public health issue affecting all aspects of physical, social, and mental health. It can affect families, work performance, and general well-being. It is important to know the signs of a gambling problem, that treatment is available, and that it works. Use this document to learn about problem gambling, how to recognize the signs of gambling addiction, and where to go for help.

## What is gambling? What is problem gambling?

- Gambling is defined as risking something of value on an unknown outcome that depends on chance or skill.
- Gambling becomes a problem when it affects any major area of life.
- Problem gambling is characterized by the inability to resist the impulse to gamble, even when there are negative consequences.
- Loss of control is at the heart of problem gambling.
- The DSM-5 classifies gambling disorder as a behavioral addiction. It is similar to substance-related disorders in many ways.

## Who is at risk for a gambling problem?

- Problem gambling does not discriminate based on age, gender, religion, social status, or education. Anyone can develop a gambling problem.
- Gambling problems may develop with any form of gambling activity.
- Groups at high risk include seniors, adolescents, college students, athletes, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities, including Asian-Americans.

## Problem Gambling Warning Signs

- Increasing the frequency and the amount of money gambled.
- Spending an excessive amount of time gambling at the expense of job or family time.
- Being pre-occupied with gambling or with obtaining money with which to gamble.
- Gambling creates a special and intense pleasure, an aroused sense of being in “action”.
- Continuing to gamble despite negative consequences such as large losses, or work or family problems caused by gambling.
- Gambling as a means to cope with loneliness, anger, stress, depression, etc.
- “Chasing” or the urgent need to keep gambling often with larger bets – or the taking of greater risks in order to make up for a loss or series of losses.
- Borrowing money to gamble, taking out secret loans, or maximizing credit cards.
- Bragging about wins but not talking about losses.
- Frequent mood swings, higher when winning, lower when losing.
- Gambling for longer periods of time or more money than originally planned.

### Lie-Bet: 2-Question Screening Tool

These two questions aid in identifying gambling problems. No single question is adequate in capturing the majority of those experiencing gambling problems. Answering “yes” to one or both of these questions is suggestive of a problem deserving further assessment.

1. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
2. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gamble?