



WISCONSIN COUNCIL
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING



Gambling rates among poor people

Why do the poor gamble much more than others? Multiple studies show, including from Florida Family Policy Council as well as University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions (RIA), that very low income households have an almost 100% higher rate of gambling than the general population. They tend to use the lotto much more, go to casinos a little more frequently, and wager money in other ways. The rate of addiction to gambling is also much higher.

This is a major problem facing society. When people gamble who can't afford to lose any of their hard earned income, this perpetuates the cycle of poverty. If a family is living on under \$30,000 per year, which is what many of the "poor" gamblers make, every single dollar they have counts. If they foolishly spend money on lotto or another "game", this could stop them from paying the rent or buying food for their child that month.

Compare that to the households with an income over \$100,000 per year. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, which was done in the mid 2010s, shows that households with an income over 100K are also heavy users of casinos. However, the commission showed that they do not develop a problem or addiction to gambling. Instead, it is a form of entertainment available to them, so they use their discretionary income to gamble.

The University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions (RIA) shows that gambling rates are 100% higher in areas/neighborhoods with above average poverty levels. That means a lower income area, in which many people live under poverty, they are much more likely to gamble, which of course increases and perpetuates poverty.

Why are the poor gambling more?

So we need to ask again, why is this? Why do families that live check to check, and that meet the guidelines of being poor, turn to gambling? Sadly there is no one reason, which makes it difficult to stop this vicious cycle.

Some of the surveys done by the Florida Family Policy Council show that the poor are hoping to win a ton of money by gambling. They think it is a quick way to riches. These individuals think that by visiting a casino they may make a few quick bucks and gain financial stability. Many lack financial education and were never taught about money as a kid.

Addiction is also a problem that is leading to these increased rates. The University at Buffalo Research Institute shows the gambling addiction rate of the poor is almost double of the general population. This is addiction in all forms, including gambling or drugs. So they continue to gamble because they literally can't stop.

Frequently Asked Questions



Problem Gambling

WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Problem gambling or gambling addiction includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The symptoms include:

- increasing preoccupation with gambling
- a need to bet more money more frequently
- “chasing” losses (betting even more to try to recoup previous losses)
- restlessness/irritability when trying to stop
- loss of control manifested by continuation of gambling despite mounting, serious, negative consequences
- in extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide (\$7 billion social cost in America alone!)

ISN'T PROBLEM GAMBLING JUST A FINANCIAL PROBLEM?

No. Problem gambling is an emotional problem that has financial consequences. If you pay all the debts of a person affected by problem gambling, the person still has a gambling problem or gambling disorder. The real issue is that they have an uncontrollable obsession with gambling.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Anyone who gambles can develop problems. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the risks and to gamble in a responsible way, if you choose to gamble. When gambling behavior interferes with finances, relationships and the workplace, a serious problem already exists.

HOW CAN A PERSON BE ADDICTED TO SOMETHING THAT ISN'T A SUBSTANCE?

Although no substance is ingested, someone with a gambling problem gets the same effect from gambling as one might get from taking a drug or drinking alcohol. But just as tolerance develops to drugs or alcohol, a person with gambling problems finds that it takes more and more of the gambling experience to achieve the same effect as before. This creates an increased urge for the activity and the person finds that they have less and less ability to resist as the craving grows in intensity and frequency.

HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE BEFORE GAMBLING BECOMES AN ISSUE?

The amount of money lost or won does not determine when gambling becomes problematic. Gambling becomes an issue when it causes a negative impact on any area of the person's life.

HOW WIDESPREAD IS PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE U.S.?

2 million U.S. adults (1%) are estimated to meet criteria for severe gambling problems each year. Another 4-6 million (2-3%) would be considered to have mild or moderate gambling problems; that is, they do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for gambling addiction 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 can do so responsibly.

CAN CHILDREN OR TEENAGERS DEVELOP GAMBLING ISSUES?

A few states allow children under 18 to gamble, and youth also participate in illegal forms of gambling, such as gambling on the internet or betting on sports in states where it is not legal. Thus, it is not surprising that research shows that a vast majority of kids have gambled before their 18th birthdays, and that children may be more likely to develop issues related to gambling than adults. While debate continues, there appears to be several factors influencing this finding. Parental attitudes and behavior play a role. Age of exposure also plays a part – research shows that adults who seek treatment for problem gambling report having started gambling at an early age.

Gambling Disorder Screening Day

About the Event

The National Council on Problem Gambling is partnering with the Cambridge Health Alliance Division on Addiction, which has developed a free Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit.

The Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit can be accessed on our website at www.wi-problemgamblers.org under the events tab.

Date

03/8/2022

Start Time

6:00 am

End Time

11:00 pm

Materials include information on:

- What is Gambling Disorder?
- Why Screen for Gambling?
- About the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen
- The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen
- An electronic version of the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (only users see their results)
- Gambling Resources & Referrals
- Your First Step to Change (2nd Edition), a self-help toolkit ...and more

The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, Inc. provides resources, public awareness and education on gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.

Services Provided by the WCPG:

- Promote public education and awareness of gambling disorders
- Maintain a toll-free statewide Helpline
- Provide Resources:
 - Gamblers Anonymous Meetings,
 - Treatment Providers,
 - Credit counseling referrals
- Expert training to professional counselors in the treatment of gambling disorders

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?

VA, R. Nora, MD [The Wager](#)

A RECOVERY STORY

I am a compulsive gambler!

I am a compulsive gambler! I have gambled as far back as I can remember. When did it turn into a problem? I really don't know. I was always a responsible person. I worked hard, paid my bills, and raised my kids to be responsible adults. When growing up, it was church bingo and poker and sheephead games at family gatherings. I never thought much about it then. As I raised my kids as a single parent, I didn't have the time or money to gamble. When my kids left home, I was fortunate to have a good job, more money, and more time for myself. At this time I remarried, but I still had a lot of time on my hands. I was used to working three jobs and taking care of my kids. Then, I discovered the Casino. I think the worst thing that happened was when I had a big win on a slot machine. It was an awesome experience. The feeling was what I thought a person doing drugs must feel. That was the beginning of a long and bumpy road for me. Over a period of about 15 years I spent a lot of time and money trying to get that feeling back again. It never happened. When I would win, I could never get up and leave. It was never enough, so I would keep playing until every dollar was gone and then would promise myself I was not going to gamble again, but that promise didn't last long. As soon as I could get my hands on more money, I would be right back. During this time, I created a lot of damage financially, personally, and emotionally. I lost a good paying job because "I borrowed from my employer," only I forgot to tell them. That put me into the legal system. I was lucky (or unlucky) because I got probation and was ordered to make restitution to my employer. You would think that would have been a wakeup call for me, but it wasn't. I kept gambling for several more years. I cleaned out our savings, retirement, and investment accounts. The day came when my husband found out because I couldn't juggle accounts or hide what I was doing anymore. I was losing my family and had already lost friends and didn't know what to do. I made a call to the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling for help and was given a Gamblers Anonymous meeting to go to. I was scared, as I didn't know what to expect. When I went, I knew it couldn't be any worse than my life had become. Going to the meeting was the best thing I could have done, because it literally saved my life. Recovery has been a life choice for me. For the last ten years, I have been active in GA and with the WCPG to get the word out that there is help and hope available. I live a peaceful life now. Fortunately, I am still married and my husband is one of my biggest supporters in my recovery. When I was "in action" I didn't like who I had become, but today I am comfortable with who I am. Being in recovery is not the easiest thing, but I am making the right choice everyday (not to gamble), and I choose to have a happy peaceful life.

Diana

Problem Gambling Warning Signs

- Increasing the frequency and 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.
- Secretive behavior such as hiding lottery tickets and betting slips, having mail, bills, etc., sent to work, a P.O. Box or other address.