



GAMBLING AWARENESS



Problem Gambling & the Criminal Justice System



Current research has documented that adult problem gamblers are almost **four times** as likely to have been arrested during their lifetime as non-problem gamblers. Overall, problem gambling has legal consequences in all groups of society from youth to senior citizens, in all socio economic levels, as well as across all races and ethnic groups. This topic is especially important as there is need for increased awareness about screening for problem gambling disorders within the correctional field. Below are some important facts about problem gambling related to the criminal justice system.

IMPORTANT FACTS

- ◆ The State of Connecticut spends over \$50,000 per year to incarcerate each inmate, and gambling is common in criminal justice populations.
- ◆ Over one-third of inmates gamble while incarcerated.
- ◆ An estimated 33% of inmates have gambling problems, with rates as high as 49% in older adult inmates.
- ◆ Over half of inmates with gambling disorder report that their incarceration resulted directly from gambling-related crimes.
- ◆ Up to half of persons with severe gambling disorder commit illegal acts to support their gambling.



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What Types of Crimes?

- ◆ The most common illegal acts include writing bad checks and stealing or “borrowing” money or goods from friends or relatives, often with the intent of returning it.
- ◆ Embezzlement is rare, but gambling-related fraud and embezzlement cases are growing especially in regions close to casinos.
- ◆ Violent non-income generating crimes are also related to gambling disorder, and nearly two-thirds of persons with gambling disorder are perpetrators or victims of violence.



Despite the prevalence of gambling and related problems, almost no one in the criminal justice system receives treatment for gambling.

Problem Gambling & Treatment

- ◆ Treatment for gambling can be very effective.
- ◆ Over 75% of persons treated for gambling substantially reduce their gambling.
- ◆ Psychiatric distress and symptoms decrease markedly with gambling treatment.
- ◆ Gambling treatment clients who commit illegal acts to support their gambling respond as well to treatment as gamblers who do not commit illegal acts.





Helpful Screening Tools/Questions

Are you ever unsure how to start the conversation about gambling? What questions to ask? How to have the conversation? Below are some examples of questions/approaches to use for reference to start the conversation! Remember, don't be afraid to ask!

Lie/Bet Questionnaire

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

*A yes to one or both questions indicates further assessment is needed

How do I start the conversation?

Sometimes the first step is the most difficult part. Try and choose a good moment to talk.

Try to talk to them in a caring and understanding way.

If the person tries to rationalize their behavior, be prepared to offer problem behaviors (bills/debt, job loss job, etc.) If the person continues to rationalize/deny a problem, end the discussion and try again another time.

Always remember to keep focused on the person's behavior, rather than on the person themselves. This tends to help people feel less defensive and more open to hearing another point of view.

Adapted from paproblemgambling.org

Interested in learning more?

Please visit the DMHAS Problem Gambling Services website (<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2902&Q=335212&dmhasNav=|>) and view some brief videos (approx. 3 min) of individuals telling stories of their struggles with gambling



Did you know UCFS hosts a Gamblers Anonymous meeting? This meeting takes place on Fridays at 12:00 PM in the Community Room at the Edward and Mary Lord Family Health Center. It is located at 47 Town St in Norwich. For more information please contact the Bettor Choice staff at 860-823-3094.