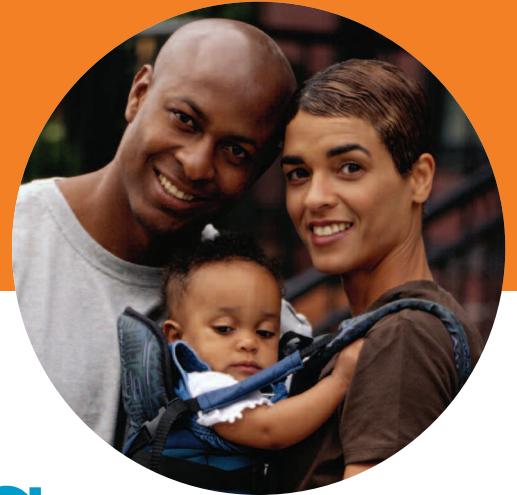
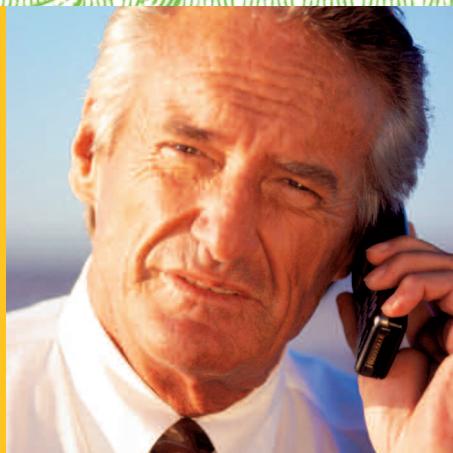




Professional Guide



Not Just a Game of Chance



New York State Office of Alcoholism
and Substance Abuse Services
Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.

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While most adults in New York are able to gamble legally as both a social and recreational activity, sometimes these activities may reach problem levels. The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) has taken numerous steps to ensure that individuals in need of problem gambling services in New York State receive the help they need.

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) is responsible for the prevention, treatment, and recovery of problem gambling for all New Yorkers. Problem gambling is a behavior that can lead to serious consequences, not only for the individual experiencing the problems, but also for their friends and family members as well. The good news is that problem gambling is treatable and there are programs and services across the state that can help. Also, for many, we can prevent these problems from starting through the efforts of our prevention programs located in our schools and communities statewide.

OASAS also recognizes the need to assist health and human service workers, educators, policy makers, families and the community at large to make them **aware of the risks** for developing a gambling problem; **recognize the signs and symptoms** associated with problem gambling behaviors; and provide **information about the services** that are available across the state for all New Yorkers who are in need of help for problem gambling.

This booklet will provide you with information that will help you understand the issues and trends surrounding problem gambling and help you find appropriate services and programs – from outreach to prevention to treatment – for your patients or loved ones at risk of developing a gambling problem.

A major cornerstone of the OASAS's strategic plan for addiction services in New York State is to raise awareness and provide education to all New Yorkers about the hope that prevention, treatment and recovery services offer. Individuals who suffer from addiction do have the ability to rebuild their lives and reunite with their families to become productive members of the community. This booklet will show you how to make a difference.

For more information:

E-Mail: gambling@OASAS.state.ny.us

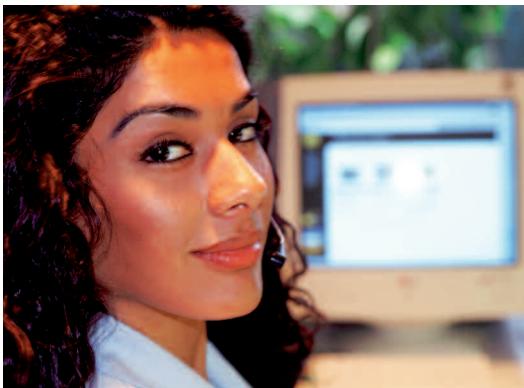
Phone: **518-457-4384**



Facts About Problem Gambling

While most New York adults can legally gamble as a social and recreational activity, sometimes these activities may reach problematic levels. Below are some facts that contribute to problem gambling.

Problem Gambling is gambling behavior which causes disruptions in any major area of one's life: psychological, physical, social or vocational. The term problem gambling includes, but is not limited to, the condition known as pathological or compulsive gambling, a progressive addiction characterized by increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, chasing losses, and loss of control manifested by the continuation of gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences (as defined by the National Council on Problem Gambling, www.ncpgambling.org).



Problem gambling has been labeled a hidden addiction because there are often no visible physical signs to help identify the problem. There are no breathalyzer tests to help professionals screen and provide needed assistance. As a result, the problem often goes undetected until a major crisis occurs. Problem gambling affects all communities and many families across New York State.

You can read more about these facts and contributing factors throughout this booklet.



Problem gambling doesn't discriminate. It can affect everyone.

- Five percent of adults in New York state experienced a gambling problem within the past year. That's over 600,000 New Yorkers over the age of 18.
- Of those adults experiencing problem gambling, 28 percent also experienced a substance use disorder in the past year.
- In addition to those individuals with a gambling problem, hundreds of thousands of family members, friends and neighbors are also affected.
- Twenty percent of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 in New York state are at risk for or currently have a gambling problem. That is almost 300,000 youth.
- Of the students in grades 7 to 12 who are in need of chemical dependency treatment, 45 percent are also at risk or in need of treatment for problem gambling.

Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse

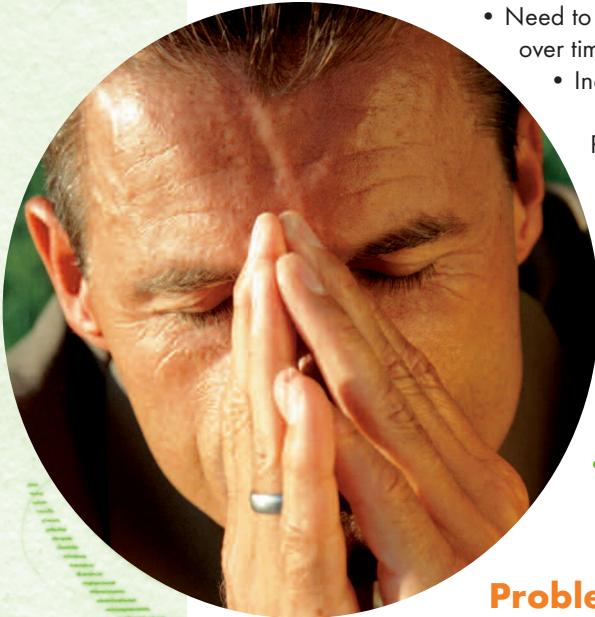
Often problem gambling is accompanied by substance abuse. A recent study conducted by OASAS indicates that 45 percent of the adolescents in need of chemical dependency services are also at risk or in need of problem gambling treatment. Of the adults (18 years and older) who experienced gambling problems during the past year, 28 percent also experienced a substance abuse problem.

Problem gamblers and substance abusers share many characteristics:

- Preoccupation with the activity.
 - Intense cravings.
 - Used to escape pain or uncomfortable feelings.
 - Need to increase the amount (of money spent gambling) over time to achieve the desired effect.
 - Inability to stop despite negative consequences.

Problem gambling differs from substance abuse in that:

- There is no substance ingested.
- There are usually no visible physical signs.
- There is no saturation point for gambling as long as money is available.
- The problem gambler believes in the possibility that the next bet can result in a big win.



Problem Gambling and Other Mental Health Disorders

Because there are often no visible physical signs of problem gambling, it is important to be aware of the common co-occurring mental health issues patients may present with. Preliminary research indicates a strong association between antisocial personality disorder and problem gambling.

Research has also indicated that problem gamblers in treatment are three times more likely to meet criteria for major depression. There is a strong association between rates of suicidal thoughts or attempts and problem gambling.

Adding problem gambling screening questions to any assessment form will increase the likelihood of identifying individuals with problem gambling behaviors.

Problem Gambling and Adolescents

Adolescents represent the future of the Empire State, and it's extremely important for these young men and women to recognize that seemingly inconsequential choices made early in life can have drastic consequences in the future. Parents and teens must heed the facts, risk factors and warning signs associated with problem gambling behavior.

Facts

- Seventy-two percent of students in grades 7 to 12 report gambling in at least one activity in the past year.
- Twenty percent of students in grades 7 to 12 are at risk for or in need of treatment for problem gambling.
- The most frequent gambling activities for those experiencing a gambling problem are: playing cards for money, playing pool, basketball or other games of skill, and dice.
- Adolescent males are four times more likely than females to have a gambling problem.
- Of those students in need of chemical dependence treatment, 45 percent are also at risk or in need of treatment for problem gambling.

Risk Factors

- Starting to gamble at an early age.
- Favorable attitudes towards gambling among parents and peers.
- Having friends who gamble.
- Community availability and attitudes that are favorable towards gambling.
- Family history of a gambling problem.
- Early initiation of antisocial behavior.
- Depressive symptoms.
- Rebelliousness.

Warning Signs

- Unexplained absences from school and/or work.
- Grades dropping and/or poor work performance.
- Stealing money from others to gamble.
- Preoccupation with gambling.
- Lying, cheating or stealing.
- Gambles as a way to escape worries, frustrations or disappointments.
- Displays large amounts of cash and other material possessions.
- Continues to gamble despite consequences.
- Attempts to cut down or stop gambling on their own.
- Intense interest in gambling conversations and uses lingo (bookie, point spread, etc.).
- Spending more and more time on gambling related activities including on the internet, reading newspapers, checking scores, etc.
- Time spent gambling interrupts time with family and/or friends and replaces previously enjoyed activities.

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems may not necessarily exhibit all of these behaviors.





Problem Gambling and College Students

Gambling among college students has become increasingly popular, largely due to televised Texas Hold'Em tournaments, and increased accessibility and availability of gambling opportunities on the internet. Additionally, the availability of credit to college students can result in significant bank and credit card company debt. Students gamble on campus, at a friend's house, at nearby casinos, racetracks and other gambling venues. Gambling today is more accessible, more accepted and more glamorized than ever before but can lead to serious consequences for college age gamblers.

Reasons Students Gamble

- Chance to win money.
- Excitement of placing a bet.
- Spending time with friends.
- Distraction from everyday life.
- Belief it is an easy way to get rich quick.
- Acceptance among their peers.
- To feel the "rush" of winning.
- To feel important.

Consequences

- Don't leave their room because they're too busy betting online.
- Drop out of school or risk academic and athletic scholarships for a perceived chance at a better future by gambling.
- Experience serious financial and personal difficulties due to gambling.
- Experience thoughts of suicide.

Warning Signs

- Thinks constantly about gambling.
- Relies on others to get out of debt.
- Is absent or late for work or school due to gambling.
- Has unexplained money or new possessions.
- Is impatient with or ignores friends and family.
- Delays or does not make payment of bills including college tuition.
- Uses credit cards for cash advances.
- Sells possessions.
- Steals money to gamble.
- Gambles for longer periods of time than intended.
- Gambles in spite of negative consequences.
- Gambles as a way to escape problems.
- Increases amount of bets to recoup losses.

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems may not necessarily exhibit all of these behaviors.

Problem Gambling and Seniors

Many seniors come from a generation where it was uncommon to admit addictive behaviors and seek treatment for them. With age can come more isolation, more free time and changes in body chemistry, all of which can turn a weekend habit into a compulsion.

Reasons Seniors Gamble

- To be socially accepted.
- Many seniors have more disposable income.
- To increase fixed incomes.
- Perception that they deserve to have some fun now.
- Escape from loneliness or boredom.
- To forget the past.
- Physical limitations may not permit past hobbies.
- Lured in by advertising (television, radio, coupons, handouts, etc.).

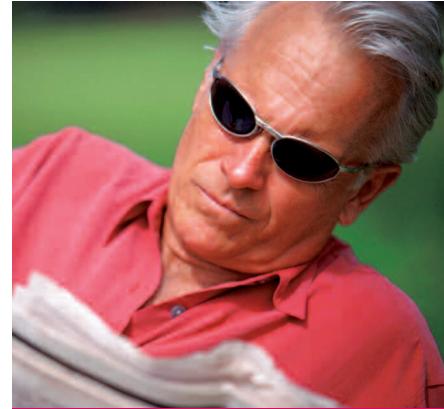
Factors that Place Seniors at Increased Risk

- Relocation (selling house, moving to senior housing, etc.).
- Depression.
- Stress.
- Loneliness.
- Fear of death.
- Loss of friends/loved ones.
- Strong marketing including “freebies” and prizes.

Warning Signs

- Experience mood swings based on winnings and losses.
- Neglects other responsibilities in order to concentrate on gambling activities.
- Impatient with loved ones if they interrupt gambling activities.
- Eats less or goes without food to gamble.
- Gambles with money designated for necessary expenses such as household supplies, groceries, medication, electricity and telephone.
- Thoughts about cashing in an insurance policy for gambling money.
- Spends retirement funds to gamble.
- Fantasizes about big winnings and winning back losses.
- Sudden requests to borrow money.
- Change in daily activities / behaviors (e.g., new drinking patterns; changed medication use)

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems may not necessarily exhibit all of these behaviors.



Health Care Professionals

What You Can Do

Health professionals across New York State are able to make tremendous differences in the lives of their patients. OASAS encourages all of New York's health professionals to take an active role in leading the fight against problem gambling.

As a health care professional, you can . . .

- Become aware of the risk factors associated with gambling.
- Be familiar with the warning signs of problem gambling.
- Add gambling screening questions (such as the LIE-BET shown on page 8) to your assessment tool.
- Become educated to the co-occurring disorders associated with problem gambling.
- Participate in training specifically related to the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.
- Find out where gambling prevention and treatment services are located near you so you can assist your patients in getting the help they need.
- Consider pursuing a gambling credential through OASAS. For more information call 1-800-482-9564 and select option 4.



Educators

What You Can Do

New York State is a national leader in education. Youths and adolescents look to our educators for leadership and guidance, and that's why it's imperative that our state's educators take the initiative to prevent problem gambling among our student populations and continue to build upon this excellent track record.

As an educator, you can . . .

- Become aware of the risk factors and warning signs of problem gambling.
- By working with gambling prevention programs in your area, increase gambling prevention efforts in your educational setting.
- Incorporate problem gambling awareness materials into your communication with parents.
- Educate students on the definitions of chance and probability.
- Develop school policies on gambling; be sure to include:
 - Restricted access to gambling sites on school websites.
 - Prohibit gambling activities on school grounds, and during any sponsored school events (bingo, casino nights, raffles, Texas Hold 'Em tournaments, etc.).
 - Promote a gambling free school zone.
 - Examine the culture and attitudes toward gambling among the school faculty and other staff.
- Avoid using gambling as a fundraising activity.
- Add gambling assessment questions in your counseling/health care assessment tools.
- On college campuses, train your Residence Assistance and Counseling staff in recognizing problem gambling.

Parents

What You Can Do

Parental involvement is a key component in the lives of our children, and communication is key.

As a parent, you can . . .

- Become familiar with the risks associated with the development of problem gambling.
- Talk with your child about gambling, and the risks that can occur.
- Encourage discussions and questions about gambling.
- Listen to what your child has to say.
- Be aware of your own gambling behavior and beliefs.
- Limit or eliminate gambling activities in the home.
- Reconsider giving lottery tickets as gifts to children or allowing them to place bets at the race track.
- Encourage your school and community to address gambling beliefs and attitudes.



Be aware of the warning signs and symptoms that indicate a child may have a gambling problem:

- Spends a lot of time gambling and thinking about gambling.
- Misses school or grades start to worsen because of time spent gambling.
- Starts to place larger and more frequent bets to maintain interest and excitement produced by gambling.
- Experiences mood swings and feels stressed when not gambling regularly or trying to reduce or stop gambling.
- Promises to stop or reduce their gambling but has trouble following through with plan.
- Lies or is secretive about gambling activities.
- Missing personal belongings or cannot cover regular expenses as he/she has used these to finance gambling activities.
- Borrows or takes money from family members or friends to gamble.
- Keeps on gambling because they believe that he/she can win back their money and then stop.
- Gambles as a means to escape or forget their problems.
- Family members or friends are concerned that your son/daughter's gambling is becoming serious.

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems may not necessarily exhibit all of these behaviors.



Screening Tools

The following are two screening tools that have been deemed valid and reliable for identifying problem gambling behaviors.

LIE BET

This is a two question instrument that can easily be added to any intake form in any setting to determine whether further screening is necessary such as the DSM-IV pathological gambling screen shown on the next page.

LIE BET Screening Instrument

Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?

Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?

LIE BET Scoring

If someone answers "YES" to one or both questions, refer the person for a further gambling assessment by contacting a local gambling treatment provider in your area or call the OASAS HOPEline at 1-877-8-HOPENY.



Resources

If you or someone you know needs help with a gambling problem, call **1-877-8-HOPENY**. The helpline is run by the New York Council on Problem Gambling. Operators can provide crisis intervention, treatment and self-help referrals, as well as general information. All calls are confidential.

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

OASAS has governing authority and responsibility for problem gambling services throughout the state.
www.oasas.state.ny.us

New York Council on Problem Gambling

The Council is a statewide outreach and education program whose main goal is to increase the awareness of problem and pathological gambling.
www.nyproblemgambling.org

National Council on Problem Gambling

The National Council provides national public information and awareness of problem and pathological gambling, ensures the widespread availability of treatment for problem gamblers and their families, and encourages research and programs for prevention and education. They also provide a national gambling helpline **1-800-522-4700**.
www.ncpgambling.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA is the federal government agency that supports programs, policy, and knowledge development about substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment, and mental health services. SAMHSA website features a problem gambling resource for clinicians.
<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/features/gambling/>

Gamblers Anonymous

A self-help organization that serves individuals with gambling problems.
www.gamblersanonymous.org

Gam-Anon

A self-help organization for spouses, family members or close friends of a problem gambler.
www.gam-anon.org

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