



Gambling and Health in the Courts

Research shows that approximately 1% of the U.S. adult population is diagnosed with a gambling disorder. Over the past few decades, researchers have focused on learning why some people cannot gamble without adverse consequences and about how people recover from gambling addiction. Here's what we've learned:

- A gambling disorder is not a sign of weakness, moral failing or lack of willpower. It is a treatable mental health disorder.
- No one gambling activity is more risky than others. People can get into trouble with all types of games, even seemingly harmless ones like bingo and the lottery.
- People with gambling disorders experience a range of problems including financial debt, professional and personal problems, withdrawal symptoms when attempting to stop or reduce gambling, guilt and shame. Remember the three Cs of addiction: People with gambling problems *crave* gambling, *continue* to gamble in spite of negative consequences and lose *control* over their gambling.
- People with other psychiatric and addictive disorders are especially vulnerable to developing a problem with gambling. Individuals with family members who have any kind of addictive disorder are also at higher risk.
- Roads to recovery include treatment with a professional therapist, Gamblers Anonymous meetings, medication and self-help resources such as workbooks and websites.
- People who gamble responsibly do so for fun, not to make money or escape from problems. They limit the time and money spent gambling and understand that the odds are always with the house.
- Currently, there are two models that allow the justice system the ability to address gambling disorders in the court setting. First, the Amherst Gambling Treatment Court is the only program in the nation that specifically focuses on this seeing individuals with this addiction. Second, various states have integrated individuals with a gambling disorder into their drug and alcohol court programs.

There are confidential resources that can help determine if a person has a gambling disorders and find help.

- *Your First Step to Change* is a confidential, interactive website that will help you decide if you have a problem and how to change your behavior. Visit www.basionline.org and click on "Self-help Tools."
- The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen asks three questions that will help you figure out if you need to seek treatment. Visit www.divisiononaddictions.org/bbgs_new/.
- If you need to find a treatment provider on your own, contact your health insurance carrier, your state department of public or mental health (some states have certification programs for gambling specialists), the national gambling help-line number (1-800-522-4700) or the American Academy of Healthcare Providers in the Addictive Disorders (www.americanacademy.org).

For more information and resources to better understand gambling disorders and responsible gaming, visit the National Center for Responsible Gaming's (NCRG) website at www.ncrg.org. The NCRG is a nonprofit organization devoted to funding scientific research on gambling disorders and translating research findings into practical applications for the public.



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