

What is Problem Gambling?

Problem gambling—also known as pathological gambling, compulsive or addictive gambling—includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The essential features are 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 continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious and negative consequences. In extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide. Gambling, like alcohol and drug addiction, is considered an addictive disorder. The American Psychiatric Association’s criteria for gambling addiction in the DSM-5 can be found on the Resources for Professionals section at www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org.

How Prevalent is Problem Gambling?

It is estimated that one to two percent of Minnesotans meet the diagnostic criteria for compulsive gambling. Another one to two percent experience problems related to their gambling behavior. This means there is likely more than 200,000 Minnesotans who struggle with gambling addiction. In addition to the damage they do to themselves, a person with a gambling problem also affects the lives of family, friends and coworkers.

Look Beyond the Surface

In your work, you come across individuals who face challenging circumstances. On the surface they may present with depression, anxiety or related mental and physical health disorders. But it’s also possible there’s an underlying issue that remains unaddressed. That core issue may be a gambling problem, and it’s often something that’s not easily recognized nor easily shared by the client.

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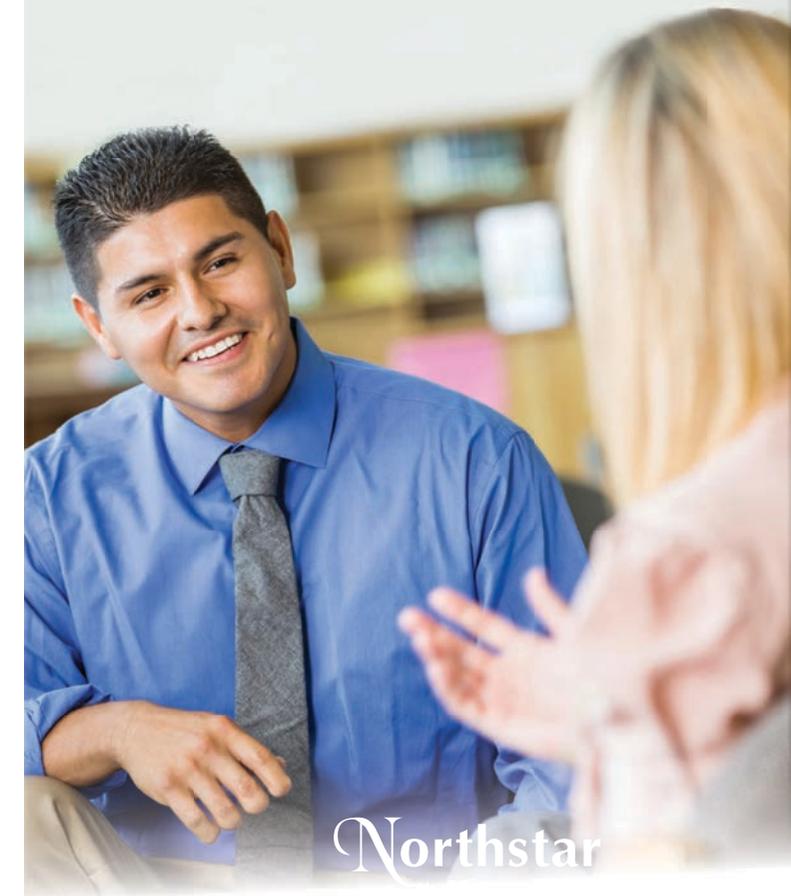


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Important information for
therapists, counselors and
helping professionals on the
topic of gambling addiction



YOU CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE

As a psychologist, social worker, healthcare worker, addiction counselor, nurse or other professional, you're in a position to identify someone with a gambling problem and refer them to help. By learning about problem gambling and the resources available, you can make an important impact on the lives of many.

THE RATE OF **DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE IS 6X HIGHER** AMONG THOSE WHO GAMBLE PATHOLOGICALLY COMPARED TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T GAMBLE.

(National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse)

ONE IN FIVE GAMBLING ADDICTS WILL ATTEMPT TO KILL THEMSELVES, ABOUT TWICE THE RATE OF OTHER ADDICTIONS. *(National Council on Problem Gambling)*

THE RATE OF **PROBLEM GAMBLING** IN THE ADULT POPULATION IS **2.2%**.

(Ontario Problem Gambling Research Center (2012).)

Warning Signs of Problem Gambling

Known as the "hidden addiction" because it's not accompanied by the obvious signs associated with drug and alcohol addiction, it takes thoughtful analysis of someone's behavior to detect a possible gambling problem. Here are warning signs of a gambling problem:

- Increased frequency of gambling activity
- Increased amount of money gambled
- Gambling for longer periods of time than originally planned
- Bragging about wins, but not talking about losses
- Pressuring others for money when financial problems arise
- Lying about how money is spent
- Escaping to other excesses (alcohol, drugs, sleep, etc.)
- Denying there is a problem

Comorbidity of Gambling Disorder

In many cases problem gambling does not occur in isolation but rather in the company of other co-presenting and co-morbid issues. For example, gambling disorder and alcohol/drug addiction are frequently part of a dual-diagnosis. Gambling issues may arise as part of health concerns related to:

- depression
- anxiety
- alcohol and drug issues

- bad health
- domestic violence
- homelessness
- financial hardship
- legal problems
- unemployment
- relationship breakdown

What Can You Do?

If you suspect that one of your clients may have a gambling problem, there are several things you can do. Formal assessment and diagnostic tools exist to determine if someone has a gambling addiction. They are listed below and accessible from the Northstar Problem Gambling website www.northstarproblemgambling.org/forprofessional/assessmenttools. They include:

- **Lie/bet Questionnaire.** The Lie/bet questionnaire is a two-item tool that is useful in determining if a longer screening tool or further assessment is appropriate.
- **South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS).** The SOGS is a lifetime measure of problem gambling. This screening tool places individuals in one of three categories: non-problem, problem gambler, probable pathological gambler.
- **Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen.** The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) is a three-item survey designed to help people decide on their own whether to seek a formal evaluation for their gambling behavior.

Minnesota Problem Gambling Resources

If you suspect your client has a gambling issue, you can refer them to a state-approved treatment provider for help. These providers include therapists, outpatient treatment programs and a residential treatment program in Granite Falls.

Minnesota Problem Gambling Helpline

1-800-333-HOPE (4673) can identify resources to help problem gamblers. The state will pay for treatment from in-network providers for both gamblers and family members. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is a twelve-step support program that holds meetings in communities around Minnesota. www.minnesotaga.com and www.gamblersanonymous.org.

Gam-Anon is for families and has meetings in communities around the state. www.gamanonmn.com.

Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance (NPGA)

provides educational resources for professionals, clients and families at www.NorthstarProblemGambling.org and through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Minnesota Department of Human Services Problem Gambling Program

- www.getgamblinghelp.com
- www.facebook.com/NoJudgment
- www.treatmentandhope.com

North American Training Institute (NATI) provides online training for gambling counselors (through the University of Minnesota-Duluth). www.nati.org

Other Web Resources

www.ncpgambling.org (National Council on Problem Gambling)

- www.asianproblemgambling.org
- www.latinoproblemgambling.org
- www.collegegambling.org