

Understanding the Hidden Addiction and the Pathways to Recovery

Lori A. Mello, MA, LPC, MPA

Program Manager – Gambling Treatment Program



Michigan Gambling Disorder Treatment and Prevention Program



Help Line

1-800-270-7117



MICHIGAN GAMBLING DISORDER 24 HOUR HELPLINE 1-800-270-7117



- **Statewide Gambling Disorder services are administered by the Michigan Dept. of Health & Human Services, and provided through a contract agreement with Health Management Systems of America (HMSA).**
- **Crisis Intervention**
- **Comprehensive Screening**
- **Treatment and Information Referrals**
- **Referral to GA/Gamanon**
- **Ongoing training**

When you think about it...gambling is everywhere in our society...



I...MEAN...EVERYWHERE...

The History of Gambling – a snapshot

Gambling history is long and varied

- During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, several forms of gambling were legalized in various regions of the country; i.e., horse racing, charity bingo games and other social games.
- In 1963, New Hampshire legalized a state lottery.
- Over the decades, several other states gradually legalized lotteries.
- During this time, Nevada remained the only state with legalized casino type gambling.
- New Jersey began to legalize casino type gambling in 1976.
- By 1998, only two states did NOT have some form of legalized gambling.

Gambling has gone through three waves of expansion in the U.S.

- The **first** wave happened before the U.S. was founded. Lotteries were used to finance the settlement of the first colonies.
- The **second** wave happened during the 1800s when gambling was often tolerated – even if not legal – as we began to head west.
- The **third** wave began when Nevada legalized casinos during the Great Depression in 1931.

Definition of Gambling

- **Gambling**: Any bet or wager, using money or something of value, where the outcome of a game, contest or event is uncertain or depends upon chance or skill.

To begin.....some basic gambling statistics

- 15% of Americans gamble at least once per week
- Approximately 2-3% of Americans meet the criteria for gambling disorder. That's around 6 million adults and about a half million teenagers.
- Youth risk developing a gambling problem at a rate of about 2-3 times that of adults. Approximately 6% of college students in America have a gambling problem.

https://addiction.lovetoknow.com/gambling_addiction_statistics

Risk Factors for Gambling Addiction

- Being male (18-24)
- Being young (both male and female)
- Being predisposed to gambling or other addictive behavior
- Mental health disorders
- Substance use disorder

<https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/process-addiction/compulsive-gambling/>

So what is Gambling Disorder??

The Gambling Diagnosis has evolved

- **Problem Gambling-** was a descriptive term used to define those individuals with problems in their lives due to gambling.
- **Pathological Gambling-** was the clinical term for the Impulse Control Disorder defined in the DSM IV. (312.31)
- **Gambling Disorder-** is the clinical term introduced in the DSM 5 associating diagnostic criteria previously known as problem gambling as Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders.

DSM 5 – Criteria for the disorder

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
- Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
- Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
- Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g. having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
- Often gambles when distressed (e.g. helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed)

Some Facts on Gambling Disorder


- Gambling Disorder impacts all ages, cultures, faiths and economic groups.
- Males and females are affected in equal numbers.
- The disorder is often co-occurring with a variety of substance use and mental health disorders
- Gambling Disorder is becoming more common among adolescents and that number continues to grow as internet gambling becomes more prevalent.

Prevalence of Gambling Disorder

- Estimates indicate about 3-5 million people, or 1-3% of the U.S. adult population, has a serious gambling problem.
- An additional 3% are *at risk* for developing a serious gambling problem.
- Two million (1%) of U.S. adults are estimated to meet criteria for gambling disorder in a given year.
- Four to eight million (2-3%) would be considered to have a problem with gambling without meeting the full diagnostic criteria for Gambling Disorder.
 - They do meet one or more of the criteria however
 - They are experiencing major problems due to their gambling behavior.

Why People Gamble

- Recreation and entertainment
- Relaxation
- Excitement
- Attempt to make money
- Attempt to feel better



Escape from feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression, boredom



To feel important



Inability to stop gambling

Characteristics of Gambling Disorder

- **Preoccupation**: Measured through frequency of participation, time lost from work.
- **Tolerance**: Needing to spend progressively more money.
- **Escape**: Gambling to escape or celebrate.
- **Lying**: About winning, hiding proof of participation.
- **Loss of control**: Borrowing to relieve desperate financial stress.
- **“Chasing” losses**: Going to win back losses.
- **Risking jobs, education, or relationships**: Arguing about gambling with friends or relatives, loss of reputation, unhappy home life.

Types of Gambling

- Casino
- Cards
- Dice
- Roulette
- Slot Machines
- Video Poker
- Stock market
- Lottery
- Racetrack
- Keno, Pull Tabs
- Internet
- Sports
- Bingo

Types of Gamblers

- **Social Gambler**

Most individuals fall into this category. Their gambling activity does not create financial, social or behavioral problems.

- **Problem Gambler**

Individuals in this category experience problems related to their gambling activity. **Problems with family relationships and increasing debt are often present in this stage.**

Types of Gamblers

- **“Risk taking” gamblers or RUSH gamblers** – this individual loves the rush or the thrill of the gambling game. This person may have always been known to be a thrill seeker or a risk taker (above and beyond the “norm”).
- **“Escape” gamblers** – more often females than males, this type gambles to escape personal problems, issues at home, relationship or job issues, or to seek escape from depression or grief.

Youth and Young Adults



Why are youth vulnerable?

- Brain still developing (*frontal lobe – under age 25*)
 - Impulsivity
- Need for supervision/direction
- Poor coping skills
- Anxiety/Depression
- Peer pressure
- Risk taking/sensation seeking

(Derevensky et al., 2005)

In addition...

- Other research has concluded that those youth who are troubled by the following have a very high probability of becoming addicted to gambling:
 - Problems at home
 - Low self-esteem
 - Peer pressure
 - Loneliness/depression/boredom
 - Escape from reality
 - Coping mechanism from life's problems
 - To gain attention from peers
 - To win money (*however, for adolescents with gambling problems, money is the vehicle, not the reason for gambling*)

Online Gambling/Gaming

- 23% of college students have gambled online. 6.3% did so weekly
- In the group that gambled frequently online, 61% were disordered gamblers (met the DSM 5 criteria for gambling disorder)
- Another report regarding online gambling noted that the easy accessibility and frequency of play of online gambling presented a significant risk of gambling disorder or problem gambling.

https://addiction.lovetoknow.com/gambling_addiction_statistics
www.ncpgambling.org

Senior Citizens: The Golden Years Slipping Away...



Why are they gambling?

- Older adults have many opportunities to gamble, and often have more free time for gambling than younger people
- Casinos offer buses to bring older adults from senior centers and retirement homes; charities offer bingo nights and raffles as older adults' social events

Why are Seniors Vulnerable?

- Time
- Catered to by casinos
 - Transportation
 - Free or discounted meals
 - Special rewards/prizes
- Provides escape/distraction
 - Loss of spouse/loved ones
 - Medical concerns
- Financial problems
- Feelings of belonging/community
 - Reduces feeling of loneliness
- Cognitive impairments
 - Dementia

Seniors' Vulnerability to Gambling

- Often dealing with
 - Retirement
 - Death of a spouse
 - Physical and emotional pain
 - Loss
 - Loneliness
 - Lack of social opportunities
 - Time on their hands to gamble
- Casinos target their marketing strategies to attract more senior patrons

Progression of Gambling Disorder

- **Winning Phase**

- Wins more than loses.
- Gambling/gaming NOT creating financial burden.
- Begins spending more time gambling/gaming

- **Losing Phase**

- Prolonged losing episodes.
- Gambling/gaming alone.
- Becomes obsessed
- Begins legal borrowing to cover losses or to obtain more gambling/gaming money.

Progression of Gambling Disorder

- **Hopelessness Phase**

- Increasing isolation
- Feeling “burned out”
- Substance use/abuse
- Emotional breakdown/Suicidal thoughts or attempts

Desperation Phase

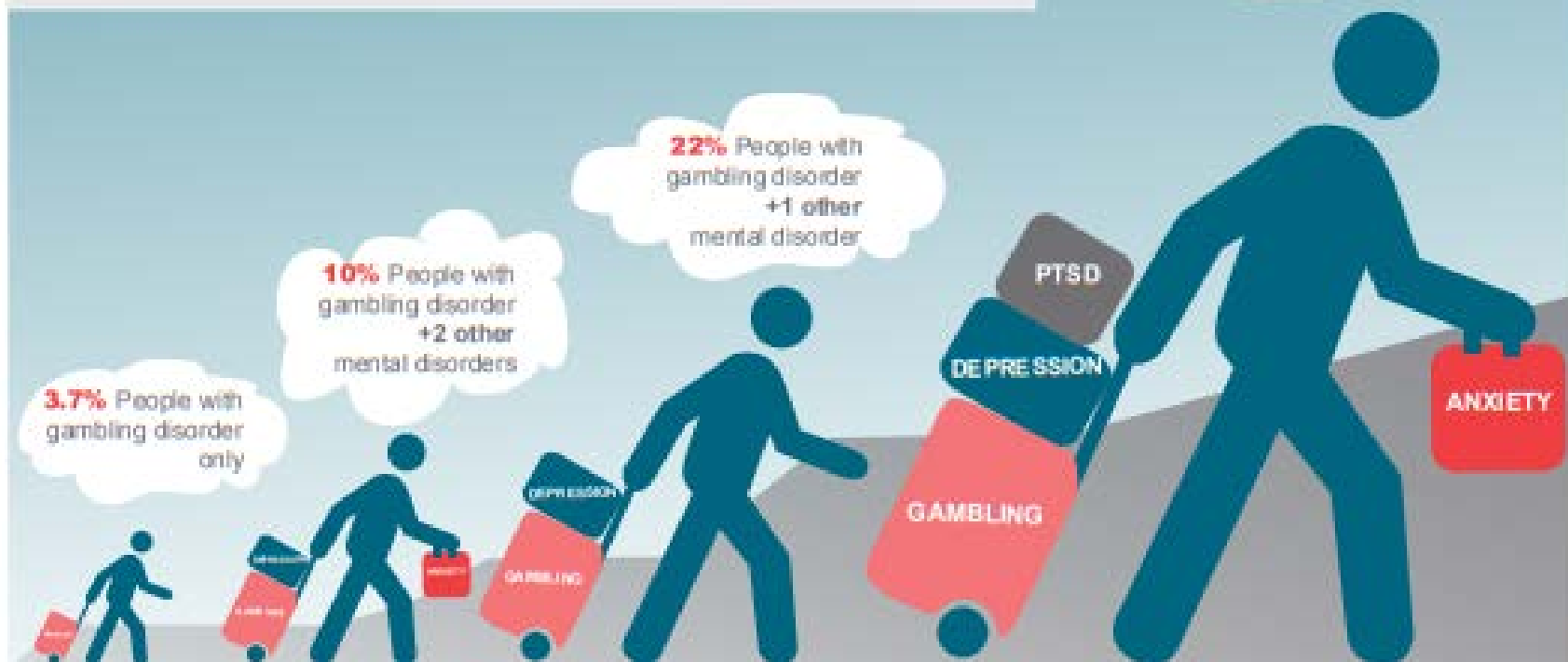
- Writing bad checks
- Borrowing or taking money from family
- Behind on rent or mortgage/bills
- Stealing
- Missing classes/work

GAMBLING DISORDER RARELY TRAVELS ALONE

There are about 2.5 million adults with gambling disorder in the United States.

More than 95% of people with gambling disorder have at least one other mental health disorder (anxiety, depression, etc.).

Two-thirds of people with gambling disorder have 3 or more other mental health disorders.



The data presented show rates of co-occurring disorders in the ~1% of adult Americans who have gambling disorder.

The data comes from the landmark mental health study, the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, conducted by Harvard Medical School and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Gambling Disorder, Mental and Behavioral Health

- People with gambling problems often have many of the same risk factors that predispose individuals to either addictive behaviors other mental health disorders such as depression, an unstable home life and lack of peer or community support.
- According to the Nat'l Comorbidity Survey Replication, 96.3 % of lifetime disordered gamblers also met lifetime criteria for one or more of the other mental health disorders addressed in the survey.

www.ncrg.org, Kessler RC, Hwang I, LaBrie R, et al. DSM IV pathological gambling among racial and ethnic groups in the US. Results from the Nat'l Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. CNS Spectrum, 2009

Similarities and Differences Between Gambling Disorder and Substance Abuse

- **SIMILARITIES**

- Lying (to family, friends) to support use
- Used as means of escaping problems
- Withdrawal symptoms common
- Co-morbidity (often there are cross addictions)
- Poor self esteem/insecurity CAN play a role
- Depression
- Poor communication/intimacy skills
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Challenges with coping skills

Similarities and Differences Between Gambling Disorder and Substance Abuse

• DIFFERENCES

- Gambling Disorder is an invisible disorder.
- No substance is ingested with gambling disorders.
- No chemical overdose with gambling disorders-no saturation point
- Unpredictability of the gambling activity.
- Easy to hide.
- Perception/acceptance of gambling disorder by the public – not thought of as a “disorder” or “addiction”
- Denial somewhat more pervasive in gambling disorder.
- Financial crisis VERY likely for gambler
- Fantasy of gambling becoming a career or “success” path
- High suicide potential
- Fewer treatment resources

ROLE OF THE CLINICIAN

- Remember to ask the questions, do the screening
- The minimal amount of questions should include the following:
 - Not, “Do you gamble?” ...but more specifically, do you...go to the casino, play the lottery, buy scratch-offs, go to BINGO, play “numbers,” participate in sports betting, etc.? How often and for what duration?
 - Have any of these activities ever caused you *any* problems such as work issues, health issues, relationship issues, etc.? There are specific questions regarding this, such as...

ASK...

- Have you ever sold anything to finance the activity?
- Were you reluctant to use "gambling money" for normal expenditures?
- Did this activity make you careless of the welfare of yourself or your family?
- Did you ever play for a longer period than you had planned?
- Have you ever played to escape worry or trouble?
- Have you ever committed, or considered committing, an illegal act to finance more time with the activity?
- Did it ever or does it cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
- Do arguments, disappointments or frustrations create within you an urge to go out and play/engage in the activity?
- Did you ever have an urge to celebrate any good fortune by a few hours of gambling (any of the activities)?
- Have you ever considered self destruction or suicide as a result of your gambling (i.e. lost a great deal of something as a result?)

Screening Tools

<u>National Opinion Research Center NORC Diagnostic Screen (NODS)</u>		Circle One:	
1	Have there ever been periods lasting 2 weeks or longer when you spent a lot of time thinking about your gambling experiences, planning out future gambling ventures or bets, or thinking about ways of getting money to gamble with?	YES	NO
2	Have there ever been periods when you needed to gamble with increasing amounts of money or with larger bets than before in order to get the same feeling of excitement?	YES	NO
3	Have you ever felt restless or irritable when trying to stop, cut down, or control your gambling?	YES	NO
4	Have you tried and not succeeded in stopping, cutting down, or controlling your gambling three or more times in your life?	YES	NO
5	Have you ever gambled to escape from personal problems, or to relieve uncomfortable feelings such as guilt, anxiety, helplessness, or depression?	YES	NO
6	Has there ever been a period when, if you lost money gambling one day, you would often return another day to get even?	YES	NO
7	Have you lied to family members, friends, or others about how much you gamble, and/or about how much money you lost on gambling, on at least three occasions?	YES	NO
8	Have you ever written a bad check or taken money that didn't belong to you from family members, friends, or anyone else in order to pay for your gambling?	YES	NO
9	Have your gambling ever caused serious or repeated problems in your relationships with any of your family members or friends? Or, has your gambling ever caused you problems at work or at school?	YES	NO
10	Have you ever needed to ask family members, friends, a lending institution, or anyone else to loan you money or otherwise bail you out of a desperate money situation that was largely caused by your gambling?	YES	NO

The **Lie/Bet Questionnaire** is useful in determining if a longer screening tool or further assessment is appropriate.

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 need to bet more and more money?

TREATMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Individuals with active gambling problems often seek help **not** for their gambling but for related symptoms such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, or for functional problems with relationships, school, or job.
- They may not conceptualize gambling as part of the problem but rather as part of the solution.

Challenges in Treatment

- There is, most often, treatment of more than one mental health issue.
- Gambling can both relieve AND contribute to depression.
- The belief system of the compulsive gambler—difficult to identify the gambling as a “destructive force” in his/her life
- Preventing relapse—gambling very “normalized” in our society
- Finding activities that will easily replace the gambling activity

Prevention – What Can Be Done?

Prevention Goals

- Increase community awareness about the effects of disordered/problem gambling in general. Have the conversation.
- Promote awareness that disordered/problem gambling is a preventable and treatable public health problem. Often, most organizations are not aware of the cost of gambling disorder in their community or company/school.

Prevention Goals

- Reduce gambling behavior among youth by addressing the risk factors that may increase the risk of disordered/problem gambling...such as
 - Family history
 - Peer connections
 - Socio-economic issues
 - Learning disabilities (using gambling as an escape from their disability)
 - Exposure to gaming online (social media)

Prevention Goals

- Reduce gambling behavior among senior citizens by addressing the risk factors that may increase the risk of disordered/problem gambling...such as
 - Easy access to gambling and gambling venues
 - Lack of any other activities available to seniors
 - Grief experienced overwhelmingly by seniors
 - Health issues/mortality fears
 - Loneliness
 - Dementia and related diminished capacity issues
 - Medication issues

Prevention Goals

- Promote the protective factors that may minimize the risk of problem gambling, such as
 - Autonomy (supporting the individual to make his/her own decisions regarding treatment)
 - Spirituality (belief system)
 - Relationship with family
 - The individual's own personal goals

Prevention Goals

- Build and maintain partnerships of individuals, agencies, and community groups to help support community approach to problem gambling prevention.
- This could include partnering with local Boys/Girls Clubs, Senior centers, local casinos, community centers and churches to do workshops.

How do we do this?

- Presentations and education, targeted to specific population needs
- Policy support and technical assistance (we can help!)
- Professional training workshops (e.g., to addictions, prevention, or mental health providers)
- Other gambling-related information or education; please feel free to contact us!

Alternative to Treatment

Disassociated Persons List

To help those who believe they have a problem with gambling, the Michigan Gaming Control Board (MGCB), with the assistance of Detroit's commercial casinos, has developed a list of Disassociated Persons, pursuant to Michigan law (MCL 432.225). Participation in the Disassociated Persons program is completely voluntary - no one but the voluntary participant may be added to the list. Persons placed on the List voluntarily pledge never to visit a Detroit casino. **This is a LIFELONG BAN.**

*If You Have a Gambling Problem, You Can Request the Michigan Gaming Control Board to Permanently Bar You From the Licensed Detroit Casinos. Call **1-888-223-3044** for application information.*

Remember...this is The “HIDDEN ADDICTION”

- There is no substance ingested
- There are usually no visible signs.

Contact information

MICHIGAN GAMBLING DISORDER TREATMENT PROGRAM



HELP LINE

1-800-270-7117