

Problem Gambling in Oregon: Public Health Concern

Gambling is usually harmless entertainment for most people. But for many Oregonians, gambling becomes a serious problem.

- ✧ One in every 37 Oregon adults (2.7 percent of adults) is a current problem or pathological gambler (*Moore, 2006*).
- ✧ One in every 25 Oregon teens (four percent of 13-17 year-olds) is at risk for, or meets the criteria for, problem gambling (*Volberg, 2007*).
- ✧ The estimated annual social costs of problem gambling to Oregonians is approximately \$468 million, while we are only spending about \$4 million per year to prevent and treat the problem (*Moore 2010*).

Problem Gambling:

“Gambling behavior which causes disruptions in any major area of life: psychological, physical, social or vocational” (*National Council on Problem Gambling*)

Pathological Gambling:

“Persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior that disrupts personal, family or vocational pursuits” (*APA, DSM-IV*)

mental health & addictions connections

Pathological gambling is classified as a mental health disorder, but also is considered to be an addiction. In addition, problem gambling is highly correlated with other mental health issues & substance use/abuse issues.

Consider of Oregonians in problem gambling treatment programs (*Oregon Health Authority, 2011*):

- ✧ **Financial Debt:** Problem gamblers reported an average of more than \$30,000 in personal gambling debts.
- ✧ **Tobacco:** More than seven in 10 problem gamblers say they also use tobacco.
- ✧ **Drugs:** About one in 10 problem gamblers admit to having drug problems.
- ✧ **Alcohol:** About three in 10 problem gamblers admit to having problems with alcohol.
- ✧ **Employment:** One in four said they experienced job-related problems.
- ✧ **Relationships:** One in five reported their gambling cost them a marriage or significant relationship.
- ✧ **Suicide:** Half of all problem gamblers said they have considered suicide, and one in 10 said they made an actual suicide attempt within six months.
- ✧ **Crime:** About four in 10 said they committed crimes to get gambling money.

youth gambling and mental health/addictions

Youth gambling and other risky behaviors are connected.

Oregon Student Wellness Surveys from 2010 6th, 8th and 11th grade students (*Oregon Health Authority, 2011*) show that kids who gamble are twice more likely to have:

- ✧ **used alcohol and have binge drank** in the past month.
- ✧ **skipped school** in the past month.
- ✧ **used marijuana** in the past month.
- ✧ **attempted suicide** in the past year.

Evidence-based prevention and treatment efforts save lives and money, and are critical in helping mitigate the effects of problem gambling. For more about Oregon Problem Gambling Services, and for the above data, please visit www.problemgamblingprevention.org/data-book.htm.