

# Problem Gambling: The Hidden Addiction

Minnesota Department of **Human Services**





# Gambling in America

- Americans annually spend more money on legal forms of gambling than on movies, music, sporting events, theme parks and video games combined.
- All but two U.S. states (Utah and Hawaii) have legalized gambling.
- Gaming revenue is a \$73 billion+ industry nationwide.

*Source: American Gaming Association*





## Who Gambles?

*Gambling crosses age, education  
and economic lines.*





# Why is Gambling Common in the Military?

- Confidence in personal skills
- Downtime and boredom
- High-risk environment
- 24/7 access to online gaming
- Stress and anxiety
- Geographical isolation
- Easy access to online gaming via laptops
- Available credit online





# When Gambling Becomes An Obsession

- Approximately 3 million adults meet the criteria for pathological gambling each year.
- Unlike alcohol or drug addiction, problem gambling has few outward signs.
- Gambling tendencies go unnoticed until significant problems develop.

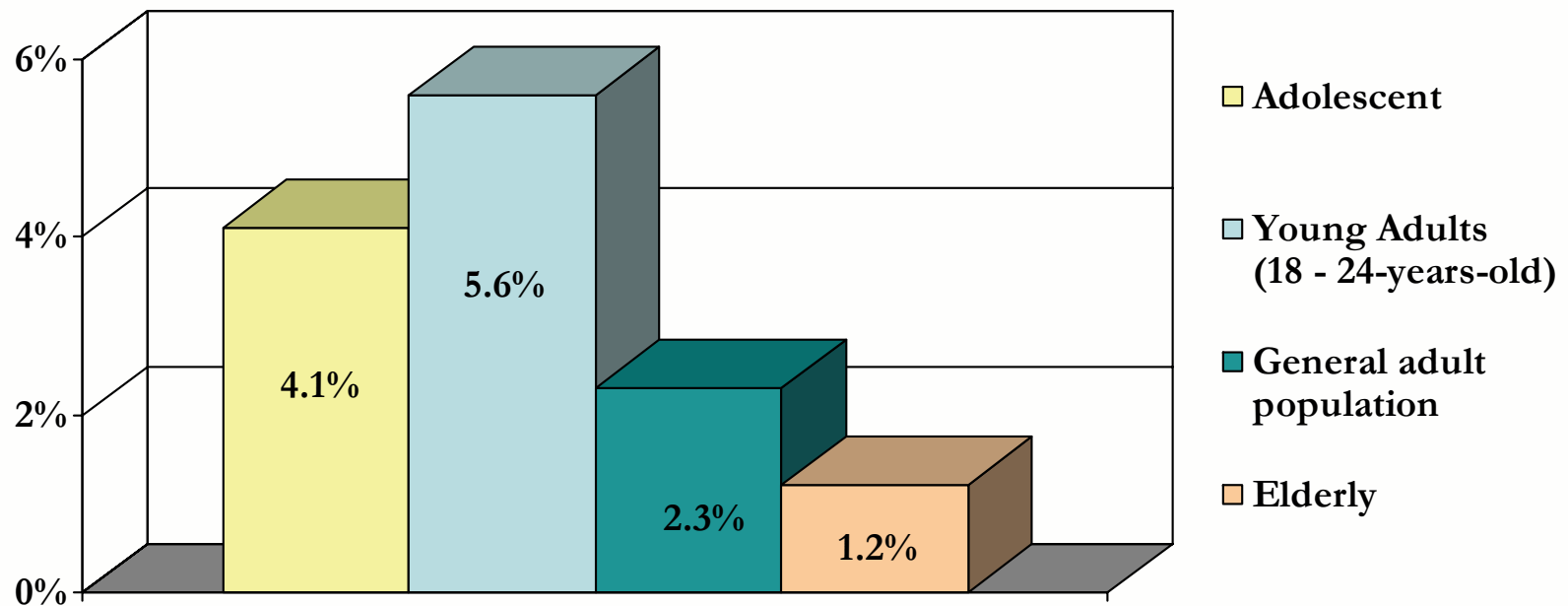
*Source: National Council on Problem Gambling*





# At High Risk:

## *Rates of Problem Gambling by Age*



*Sources: Carlson & Moore, 1998; Shaffer & Hall, 2001; Moore, 2001; Volberg, 2001*





**It's estimated there may be at least  
36,000-48,000 active duty service  
members with gambling problems.**

- NCPG





**“Compulsive gambling is a serious disorder, as exhibited by extraordinarily high rates of suicide, severe depression, alcohol abuse and crime.”**

- House Armed Services Committee, 1989







# The Consequences of Problem Gambling Can Be Severe

- *Financial:* stealing, fraud, bankruptcy
- *Psychological:* depression, suicide
- *Social:* isolation, withdrawal
- *Family:* neglect and abuse
- *Vocational:* decline in work performance





# Some Disturbing Side-Effects

- **Substance use:** Among as many as 50% of pathological gamblers
- **Depression:** As many as 76% of gamblers in treatment show signs of depression
- **High incidence of suicide**
- **Severe financial problems**
- **Marital separation and divorce**
- **Job loss**
- **Legal problems**





# Implications for Military Personnel

- Impact on family relationships
- Gambling behaviors affect marital, social, occupational, financial and spiritual life.
- Potential impact on military career.
- Potential impact on individual readiness.





# What Can Happen?

- Letters of indebtedness
- Bounced checks
- Misuse of government credit cards
- Security risk
- Forgery
- Embezzlement
- Loss of rank
- Divorce
- Lost work time/productivity
- Forced retirements
- Bad conduct discharges
- Suicidal risks
- And more...





## True or False?

The main reason people gamble is  
to win money.





**False.**

**Gamblers sometimes use betting as a way to cope with boredom, loneliness, anger, stress and depression. In fact, the most commonly given reasons for gambling are fun and excitement.**

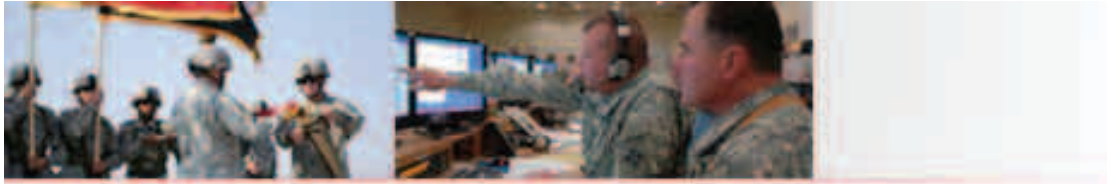




## True or False?

**Elderly adults are at greatest risk of developing a gambling problem.**





**False.**

**Young adults, such as yourself, are said to be three times as likely as other adults to suffer from problem gambling.**







## True or False?

**People who have a gambling problem are also likely to have problems with other addictive behaviors.**





## **True.**

**It is generally accepted that people with one addiction are more at risk to develop another. Therefore, many problem gamblers also find they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. Some never experience any other addiction, however, because nothing else gives them the same "high."**

**-NCPG**





## True or False?

**Aggressive advertising by casinos, lotteries and online poker sites is the reason for much of today's problem gambling.**





## False.

The cause of a gambling problem is a person's inability to control their impulses. This may be due in part to a genetic tendency to develop addiction, an inability to cope with normal life stress or other factors. A casino or lottery, however, only provides the *opportunity* for the person to gamble. It does not, in and of itself, create the problem any more than a liquor store would create an alcoholic.

-NCPG





## True or False?

**One sign of a problem gambler is their tendency to play every day.**





## False.

The frequency of a person's gambling does not determine whether or not they have a gambling problem. Even though the problem gambler may only go on only periodic gambling binges, the emotional and financial consequences will still be evident in the gambler's life every day.

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# True or False?

Controlling problem gambling is a matter of willpower.





**False.**

**Like other compulsive and addictive behaviors, problem gambling is most effectively treated through professional counseling from a trained treatment provider.**







## True or False?

**If a problem gambler needs assistance,  
they must be the one to call the  
Helpline.**





**False.**

**While it is important for a problem gambler to eventually understand that they need help, family members can also call the Helpline seeking information and a referral.**





## True or False?

**When someone calls the Helpline, the only information required is the name and hometown of the gambler.**





**False.**

**Actually, no information is required when someone calls. The Helpline is a free, confidential information and referral resource.**





## True or False?

**Cost of treatment is a major obstacle for most problem gamblers.**





**False.**

**Financial resources are available to help  
Minnesota problem gamblers get  
treatment, if they can not afford it. Also,  
family members can access treatment  
even if the gambler is unwilling to  
participate in treatment.**





# Know the Warning Signs of Problem Gambling

- Frequent gambling
- Increasing amounts gambled
- Neglecting work and family
- Preoccupation with gambling and money
- Borrowing money
- Mood swings
- Isolation, withdrawal, secretive behavior (hidden disease)
- Gambling to win back losses (chasing)
- Dishonesty or lying



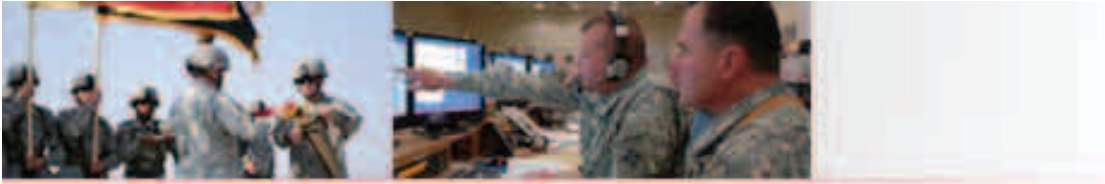


**Problem gambling can  
change your life.  
So can the right help.**

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**Problem and pathological gambling  
are both conditions that respond  
well to intervention.**





# No Judgment. Only Hope.

- Problem gamblers need *hope* for their future and *help* to address their problems.
- Help is available for friends and families of problem gamblers, regardless of whether the problem gambler seeks treatment.
- Financial resources are available for Minnesotans who cannot afford treatment.





# How Can You Help a Problem Gambler?

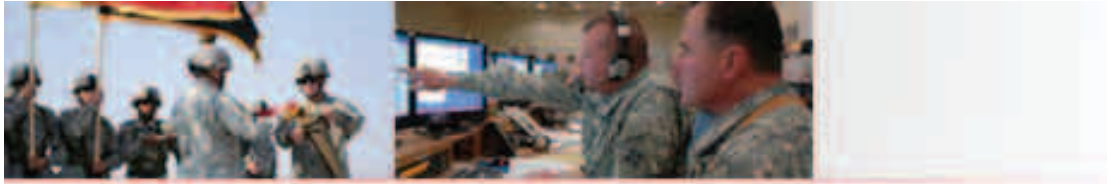
*Take a Straightforward Approach.*



- Express care and concern.
- Be specific about the behavior.
- Listen with empathy.
- Set expectations:
  - What *you hope* they will do; and
  - What you are *willing* to do.







# Free, Confidential Information

Toll-free helpline: 1-800-333-HOPE  
[www.nojudgment.com](http://www.nojudgment.com)

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