



Problem Gambling Treatment and Interventions

Problem gambling is a growing addiction within all populations, with especially alarming prevalence rates among youth. Additionally, there is evidence that problem gamblers have elevated rates of criminal activity ^{1,2,3}, substance abuse ⁴, mental health problems ^{5,6}, financial stress ⁷, and suicide ^{8,9}. Unfortunately, because gambling is often masked by the aforementioned issues, it is rarely identified or treated. Furthermore, no evidence-based gambling interventions have been developed; however, there are prevention programs and other strategies that are being utilized in diverse environments. The following interventions are available to the public and can be implemented by non-professionals in a variety of settings.

Prevention Strategies and Interventions

The onset for gambling youth is quite early, thus gambling prevention programs need to be targeted in the pre-teen years ¹⁰. Furthermore, most interventions have also been developed for youth populations, although many are theoretically-based and valid to use with adults as well.

Harm Reduction Methods

Because gambling is a legal and socially accepted behavior, abstinence is not always the goals of prevention programs. HR models teach adults and youth about negative consequences of problem gambling and how to maintain healthy gambling behaviors ¹¹.

- Oregon's Gambling Behavior and Reduction Program offers a self-help book for adults "Learn to manage your Gambling" which can be downloaded for free from <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/gambling/gear-workbook.pdf>
- "Beat Addiction: Choose the right path" is an interactive workshop for youth that presents facts about the spectrum of addictive behaviors and offers resources for those with addictions in their families ¹².
- "Wanna Bet" is a comprehensive gambling intervention strategy which includes a short video, fact sheets, a brief history of gambling, and a parent letter. Wanna Bet? Magazine, also available as an intervention tool, is an online interactive publication for teens, designed by teens ¹³.
- YouthBet.net is another website designed by teens in Ontario, Canada. The website's goals are to: promote informed and balanced attitudes, prevent youth gambling related health problems, and protect at-risk youth from gambling-related harm ¹⁴.

School based and General curriculum

Skill-building and coping strategies for problem gambling are often incorporated into more general addiction and adolescent risk behavior prevention programs which already occur in schools ¹¹.

- "Gambling: Reducing the Risks" also emphasizes how youth can make healthy choices about betting and gambling, and includes a video, discussion questions, facts about accessing resources, and consequences of problem gambling ¹⁵.
- "Facing the Odds" teaches mathematical reasoning and other related skills to increase student interest in math and decrease the likelihood of developing addiction ¹⁶.



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- *Clean Break* is a video intervention discusses the importance of various influences on youth behaviors, such as familial and community factors and is available in English and French. A workshop manual with ideas for discussion and CD-ROMs for both primary and secondary school are also available ¹⁷.



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Minimal Interventions

These are often recommended as supplemental intervention methods

- Gambler's Anonymous¹⁸.
- Self-Help Manuals: *The Guide to Good Gambling*¹⁹

The aforementioned intervention and prevention models are not an exhaustive list of what has been developed. Due to the relatively modern nature of problem gambling in youth populations, most interventions have yet to be formally evaluated, and more research is necessary in the field of gambling intervention strategies so that schools, families, and communities can ensure that their youth succeed.

LIE-BET TOOL TO RULE OUT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING²⁰

This 2-item measure has been found to be reliable and valid at discriminating between pathological and non-problem gamblers. A response of "Yes" to either question indicates further assessment is warranted.

- 1) **Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?**
- 2) **Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?**

For more information visit the GSU Problem Gambling Research and Intervention Project web site:

www.GeorgiaGamblingHelp.org

This site offers resources related to problem gambling prevention and treatment. For additional help or technical assistance contact Jennifer Zorland at psyj1z@langate.gsu.edu

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