



**Division of Addictive Diseases**

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## **Problem Gambling: Youth, Delinquency, and Substance Abuse**

Research has shown that between 5-8 % of Americans under eighteen have a serious gambling problem compared to 1-3 % of adults and it is estimated that 10-14% of youth are at-risk for problem gambling<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Furthermore, the rate of gambling among youth in detention centers, psychiatric facilities, and in substance abuse program are approximately double the rates found in community and school samples<sup>4</sup>. Because adolescents are also least likely to determine that they engage in problem gambling<sup>5</sup>, resources need to be dedicated towards helping professionals identify those most at-risk and target youth for appropriate treatment interventions.

### **Common underlying risk factors**

- Risk factors associated with both drug abuse and problem gambling among youth are low self-esteem, depression or suicidality, being a victim of abuse, poor school performance, a history of delinquency, being male, early drug or gambling experience, parental drug or gambling problem activity, and easy accessibility<sup>6</sup>

### **Substance use and youth problem gambling**

- 59% of problem gamblers frequently used alcohol and illicit drugs
- Gambling tended to precede smoking tobacco, marijuana use, and alcohol use (11.2, 11.3, 11.6, and 13.2 years of age, respectively).
  - Males had significantly earlier onset than females of these behaviors
- Problem gamblers were more likely than non-problem gamblers to:
  - use illicit drugs, and to smoke tobacco and marijuana
  - drink alcohol to intoxication monthly or more frequently<sup>8</sup>
- Students who never used drugs were 3.1 times less likely to have ever gambled than those who had used drugs
- Students who reported weekly/daily use of drugs were 3.8 times more likely to report weekly/daily gambling than those who used drugs less frequently (or not at all)<sup>6</sup>

### **Youth Seeking Treatment for Marijuana Abuse**

- Among a sample of youth entering treatment for marijuana abuse, a higher percentage (22%) experienced gambling problems than found in the general youth population
- Problem gamblers showed a greater frequency of drug and alcohol use, more illegal activity, greater psychiatric problems, more sexual activity, and were more likely to have been victims of abuse than the non-problem gamblers<sup>9</sup>.

## Gang affiliation and youth gambling

- Gang members had significantly higher rates of gambling, as well as more positive attitudes about gambling and frequent gambling than non-gang members
- Gang members reporting significantly higher rates of stealing to pay for gambling<sup>7</sup>.

## Incarceration and youth problem gambling

- Brown, Killian, and Evans (2005) found a strong association between gambling frequency and criminal behavior, suggesting that some criminal activity may be related to financing gambling<sup>7</sup>.

## Incarcerated youth reported the following

- 54% gambled for money
- 27% gambled 5 or more times a month
- 12% stole money to pay for gambling
- 13% borrowed money to pay for gambling<sup>7</sup>

## Legal problems related to gambling reported by students grades 6 – 12 in Louisiana

- Stealing to gamble (4.8 percent)
- Stealing from sources outside the family to gamble (2.8 percent)
- Gambling-related arrests (1.5 percent)
- Serious financial problems due to gambling (6.2%)<sup>8</sup>

### LIE-BET TOOL TO RULE OUT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING<sup>16</sup>

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?

<sup>7</sup> Brown, R., Killian, E., & Evans, W. P. (2003). Familial functioning as a support for adolescents' post-detention success. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 47, 529 – 541.

<sup>2</sup> Hardoon, K. K. & Derevensky, J. L. (2002). Child and adolescent gambling behavior: Current knowledge. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 7, 263-281.

<sup>3</sup> Jacobs, D. F. (2000). Juvenile gambling in North America: An analysis of long-term trends and future prospects. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 16, 119-152.

<sup>5</sup> Ladouceur, R. (2004). Gambling: The hidden addiction. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 49, 62 – 71.

<sup>1</sup> Nower, L. & Blaszczynski, A. (2004). The pathways model as harm minimization for Youth gamblers in educational settings. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21, 25-45.

<sup>9</sup> Petry, N. M. & Tawfik, Z. (2001). Comparison of problem gambling and non-problem gambling youths seeking treatment for marijuana abuse. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40, 1324- 1331.

<sup>4</sup> Stinchfield, R. (2000). Gambling and correlates of gambling among Minnesota public school students. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 16, 153 – 173.

<sup>8</sup> Westphal, J. R., Rush, J. A., Stevens, L., & Johnson, L. J. (2000). Gambling behavior of Louisiana students in grades 6 through 12. *Psychiatric Services*, 51, 96 – 99.

<sup>6</sup> Winters, K. C. & Anderson, N. (2004). Gambling involvement and drug use among adolescents. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 16, 175 – 198.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, E. E., Hamer, R., Nora, R. M., Tan, B., Eistenstein, N., & Englehart, C. (1988). The lie/bet questionnaire for screening pathological gamblers. *Psychological Reports*, 80, 83-88.