



**Office of Communications**

*Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 22.365, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3171 ~ 404-657-2254*

## **Problem Gambling: Warning signs and help available**

The vast majority of individuals can gamble without experiencing ill effects, yet roughly 4% of the general population has had a gambling problem<sup>1</sup>. It is important to know the warning signs of problem gambling and where to go to obtain help should you or someone you know have indicators of a gambling problem.

### **Signs of a gambling problem**

- Gambling more than intended
- Continually talking about gambling
- Spending more money or time gambling than you can afford
- Gambling more in order to win back losses
- Borrowing, stealing, or selling things to get money for gambling or to pay gambling debts
- Having financial difficulties such as not being able to pay bills due to gambling
- Gambling to escape problems or boredom, or to relieve anxiety or depression
- Being criticized by others for your gambling
- Hiding signs of gambling activities such as lottery tickets or betting slips
- Missing work, school or other commitments due to gambling

### **Diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling**

The American Psychological Association<sup>2</sup> requires having 5 of 10 clinical features which tap into 3 dimensions believed to be indicative of pathological gambling: disruption, dependence and experiencing a loss of control, including the following:

- a preoccupation with gambling
- needing to gamble with larger amounts of money to achieve arousal
- failed attempts to control gambling behavior
- irritability when limiting gambling activities
- gambling to escape problems
- “chasing” losses
- lying about gambling behavior
- participation in illegal activities to gamble or pay gambling debts
- experiencing negative impacts on relationships or employment due to gambling
- having a reliance on others to alleviate financial issues resulting from gambling

### **Help is available**

Visit the GSU Problem Gambling Research and Intervention Project’s web site ([www.GeorgiaGamblingHelp.org](http://www.GeorgiaGamblingHelp.org)). There you will find numerous resources regarding the treatment of problem gambling, such as:

- A list of local Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon meeting times and locations.



**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities**  
*Frank E. Shelp, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner*

---

**Office of Communications**

*Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 22.365, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3171 ~ 404-657-2254*

- A directory of treatment providers specializing in the treatment of problem gambling
- Assessment tools to determine if you are in need of a professional assessment
- Self-help workbooks



## **Gambling responsibly<sup>1</sup>**

If you do gamble, there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of out of control gambling.

- **Don't think of gambling as a way to make money:** Even if you experience a win, the odds are not in your favor. Over time you will lose money.
- **Only gamble with money that you can afford to lose:** Only gamble with money that you set aside for entertainment, like going to the movies or to a show. Never use money that you need for basic necessities, such as rent, bills, groceries, tuition, etc.
- **Set a limit:** Decide how much money you can afford to lose before you gamble. When you have lost that amount of money, STOP. If you win – great, but keep in mind that you will likely not win the next time.
- **Set a time limit.** Determine how much time you can afford to spend gambling before you begin. When you reach that time limit, stop gambling.
- **Never chase losses.** If you lose money, don't bet more to try to win it back. This usually leads to even bigger losses.
- **Don't gamble when you are depressed or upset:** It is hard to make good decisions about gambling when you are feeling down.
- **Don't gamble when your judgment is impaired:** Gambling when you have been drinking or are under the influence can lead to uncontrolled betting, thus increasing the risk of developing a gambling problem
- **Balance gambling with other leisure activities:** Make sure you continue to participate in enjoyable activities other than gambling.

## **LIE-BET TOOL TO RULE OUT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING<sup>3</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 additional assessment may be necessary.

- 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](http://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](mailto:psyj1z@langate.gsu.edu)



**Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities**  
*Frank E. Shelp, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner*

---

**Office of Communications**

*Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 22.365, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3171 ~ 404-657-2254*

- <sup>1</sup>Emshoff, J., Anthony, E., Lippy, C., & Valentine, L, Mooss, A., Perkins, A., & Zorland, J.. (2007). *Gambling Report for the Georgia Department of Human Resources*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, Department of Psychology.
- <sup>2</sup>American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4<sup>th</sup> ed. text revision). Washington DC: Author.
- <sup>3</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.