



## Problem Gambling among College Students

Research has demonstrated that problem gambling is prevalent among college students. The vast majority of individuals can gamble without experiencing ill effects, yet nearly 8% of college students may develop a gambling problem. Gambling has become an acceptable form of leisure on college campuses. However, the warning signs of developing a gambling problem are not highlighted, as is seen with other potentially addictive behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use. College administrators can help to minimize the negative outcomes associated with problem gambling by being proactive and developing policies that promote addressing problem gambling. Specifically, increasing awareness among staff, faculty, and students of the warning signs of, and where to get help for a gambling problem, as well as establishing clear university guidelines regarding gambling activities may mitigate the prevalence and incidence of this disorder.

### Prevalence of Problem Gambling among College Students in the US

- The prevalence of problem gambling among college students has been estimated at 7.8%<sup>1</sup>, which is considerably higher than the roughly 5% rate found among the general population<sup>2</sup>.
- In the State of Georgia 7.8% of college students were assessed as having a gambling problem<sup>3</sup>.
  - 2.4% were Pathological Gamblers; 5.4% were Problem Gamblers
  - The University System of Georgia reported that 283,000 students were enrolled in public GA colleges in 2008. This equates to 22,074 public college students with a gambling problem (6,792 Pathological Gamblers and 15,282 Problem Gamblers).

### Gambling Activities<sup>4</sup>

- The lottery is the most popular gaming activity among college students of both genders. Male students are more likely to bet on cards, sports, and other games that involve skill. Female students are more likely to gamble at casinos, or play slot machines and bingo.

### Signs of Problem Gambling

- Signs of problem gambling among college students include lowered academic performance, isolating behavior, displaying extreme overconfidence and poor impulse control, and participation in other high risk behaviors such as bingeing on alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use, and risky sexual behavior<sup>5,6</sup>.

### Risk Factors for Problem Gambling among College Students

- Male college students are at increased risk of experiencing gambling problems compared to female college students<sup>1,5</sup>. Fifteen percent of college males participated in weekly gambling activities as compared to only 1.6% of college women<sup>7</sup>, and frequent gambling participation may be an indicator of a gambling problem.
- College athletes are more likely to gamble than non-athletes<sup>8</sup>. Student athletes are 2 times more likely to be problem gamblers than non-student gamblers<sup>9</sup>. Male college athletes are more likely than female college athletes to exhibit problem gambling behavior<sup>8</sup>.

## Environmental factors

Availability of gambling opportunities and social normative beliefs that are supportive of gambling activities increase the likelihood of gambling participation and of the development of a gambling problem. Administrators who are aware of environmental conditions that may contribute to problem gambling can develop policies to protect students.

- College poker tournaments are common on campuses<sup>10</sup>.
- Many college bookstores carry numerous books on how to improve one's poker game or how to "beat the odds", yet books that promote participation in other potentially addictive behaviors are not offered.
- A lack of gambling policies on college campuses may contribute to the incidence of problem gambling among college students. The findings from a national study assessing college alcohol and gambling policies showed that each school that was contacted had alcohol policies, yet only 22% of American colleges and universities had gambling policies<sup>11</sup>.

## Recommendations to reduce the incidence/prevalence of PG among college students

- Establish campus policies regarding gambling, including delineating which type of gambling events would compromise student health, implementing problem gambling interventions, and assessing students' attitudes and behaviors towards problem gambling.
- Increase awareness of the warning signs of problem gambling, as well as where to obtain help if students suspect that they, or a friend or family member has a gambling problem.
- Participate in National Problem Gambling Awareness Week. Additional information is available at NCPG.com
- Incorporate problem gambling interventions into programs targeted at co-occurring behaviors such as alcohol and substance abuse
- Train college counselors in the identification and treatment of problem gambling. See the 2 item Lie/Bet measure<sup>12</sup> below.
- Contact the GSU Problem Gambling Research/ Intervention Team for technical assistance.

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 [psyjz@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:psyjz@langate.gsu.edu)

<sup>1</sup>Blinn-Pike, Worthy, Jonkman (2006). Disordered gambling among college students: A meta-analytic synthesis. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 23.

<sup>2</sup>Shaffer, H. J., Hall, M. N., & Vander Bilt, J. (1999). Estimating the prevalence of disordered gambling behavior in the United States and Canada: A research synthesis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 89(9), 1369-1376.

<sup>3</sup>Valentine & Emshoff. (2007). Problem and pathological gambling among students in the university system of Georgia. Georgia State University.

<sup>4</sup>Engwall, Hunter, & Steinberg. (2004). Gambling and other risk behaviors on university campuses. *Journal of American College Health*, 52(6).

<sup>5</sup>LaBrie, et al. (2003). Correlates of college student gambling in the United States. *Journal of American College Health*, 52, 53-62.

<sup>6</sup>Goodie, A.S. (2005). The role of perceived control and overconfidence in pathological gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 21(4), 481-502.

<sup>7</sup>The Annenberg Public Policy Center. (2005). Card playing trend in young people continues. University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>8</sup>NCAA. (2004). National study on collegiate sports wagering and associated health risks, executive summary.

<sup>9</sup>Oster, S., and Knapp, T. (1998). Sport betting by college students: Who bets and how often? *College Student Journal*, 32 (2).

<sup>10</sup>Wehner, M. (2007). College Poker Life: UCLA, Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved on November 30, 2007 from <http://www.pokernews.com/news/2007/11/college-poker-ucla-los-angeles-ca.htm>

<sup>11</sup>Shaffer, H., Forman, D., Scanlan, K., & Smith, F. (2000). Awareness of gambling related problems, policies, and educational problems among high school and college administrators. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 16(1), 93-101.

<sup>12</sup>Johnson, et al.. (1988). The lie/bet questionnaire for screening pathological gamblers. *Psychological Reports*, 80, 83-88.