

# Improving Your Odds

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## Pilot Study Reveals Gambling Attitudes and Behaviors Among Iowa College Students

A recent pilot study concerning gambling among Iowa College students had some fascinating findings. Overall, the study revealed that problem gambling is higher among males than among females. Some types of gambling are practiced at a higher rate among college students, particularly males, than in the general population. Gambling among college students is not uncommon – over two-thirds of the students in the sample had gambled in the past year – but less than 3% were classified as problem or pathological gamblers. This is an indication that the majority of gambling practiced by college students is, in all likelihood, only a form of entertainment; the conclusion is further supported by the evidence that suggests college students are most motivated by the social aspects and entertainment value of gambling.

However, 3% does not result in a small number when it is calculated from the general population of college students in Iowa or the US. Many thousands of college students could be in need of treatment for problem gambling and even more students would benefit from problem gambling prevention messages.

Knowledge and awareness of gambling and gambling treatment is low and social norms may be unrealistic, particularly social norms of male gambling behavior. Respondents in the pilot study had positive attitudes toward treatment-seeking behavior for addictions and for gambling, although only one individual actually had received gambling treatment; this disconnect may be due to the impact of social stigma as a road block to treatment. Problem gambling was looked at differently than substance

addictions. One interesting observation that was taken from the pilot study was how the study could not pinpoint one factor as the major indicator of a person's perspective on gambling addiction. It was noted that multiple factors played a role in respondents' perspectives on problem gambling as an issue for college students, including their own gambling experiences, habits of friends and family, and moral/ethical concerns.

What does this study mean to you and to young people in Iowa? It means that we have a long way to go in getting the word out about gambling prevention and intervention. It seems that in small town Iowa the prevalent attitude is, "We don't have a problem here." The statistics show a persistent problem with youth and problem gambling, many are in need of treatment but most do not seek help for their problems because of unrealistic social norms, lack of



awareness of the issue and little or no knowledge about available resources. We can partner with you to change those social norms. Do you know someone who is struggling with a gambling addiction? Call Community and Family Resources at 515-832-5432 to talk with one of our trained counselors today.

*All statistics come from [http://www.idph.state.ia.us/IGTP/common/pdf/reports/cnbr\\_college\\_gambling\\_final.pdf](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/IGTP/common/pdf/reports/cnbr_college_gambling_final.pdf)*

**"Children of compulsive gamblers are often prone to suffer abuse, as well as neglect, as a result of parental problem or pathological gambling"** (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, 1999)

**Compulsive gamblers rose from 1.7% to 5.4% since gambling was legalized in Iowa** <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/gamble/procon/horn.html>



# Community and Family Resources

**"Community and Family Resources is a pro-active organization dedicated to assisting individuals, families, and communities achieve healthy behavior and lifestyle through advocacy, prevention, and treatment of substance abuse and problem gambling."**

*Since 1968, CFR has a long history of helping people learn healthy behaviors to prevent addictions and achieve an improved quality of life while maintaining abstinence from addictive behaviors.*

## Problem Gambling Increases Among Youths

Have you ever bet a friend that you can beat them in a race up a hill, and if you win they owe you a soda pop or a quarter? It seems harmless and innocent, but the concept of gambling develops while we are young because of the excitement and addiction to winning. Gambling has been on the rise with teenagers ages 14-19.

Research has shown that, for a person addicted to gambling, playing poker, black jack, or other activities involving risk activates the same receptors in the brain as do alcohol or other drugs in the brain of a person with a substance abuse addiction.

According to the DSM IV criteria we know that sub-

**Gambling generates more revenue than movies, spectator sports, theme parks, cruise ships and recorded music combined.** (Source:

[www.thewestsidegurch.us/images/sermons%201/gambling\\_is\\_it\\_scriptural.htm](http://www.thewestsidegurch.us/images/sermons%201/gambling_is_it_scriptural.htm)



stance abuse is a disease. We also know that according to the DSM V criteria, coming out soon, that problem gambling is also a disease.

One might think that a

***You don't gamble to win. You gamble so you can gamble the next day.*** Bert Ambrose (1896-1971; English bandleader and violinist)

gambling addiction couldn't possibly be as serious as addiction to a physical substance, however a gambling addiction can be just as destructive, if not worse. Online gambling has become the most addictive type of gambling. The advancement of technology has made it easy to gamble at home, work, or anywhere else; anyone with access to a computer or smart phone can enjoy the thrill of gambling.

Some signs that a person may be a problem gambler are:

- Financial devastation for the individual as well as the family
- Mental and physical health issues, fatigue, anxiety, insomnia, sui-

dal thoughts, etc.

- Ruined relationships with loved ones
- Domestic violence, both verbal and physical abuse
- Work issues, i.e. lower productivity rates, frequent absences, embezzlement, etc.

Depression and mental health concerns are prevalent among problem gamblers. National studies show that problem gamblers have the highest rate of suicide among those with addictive disorders. Therefore if we combine those statistics with the fact that most suicide deaths in general are by teenagers, we have a recipe for disaster. There are multiple resources to prevent problem gambling and also help for people that are already in the addiction phase. 1-800-BETS-OFF will connect a client to their local treatment agency to get help. Those in need may also call 866-801-0085 directly for help.

References

<http://www.ncpgambling.org/i4a/headlines/headlinedetails.cfm?id=1124&archive=1>  
<http://www.ncpgambling.org/i4a/headlines/headlinearchives.cfm>

**6 million adults and 500,000 teens in the U.S. meet criteria for gambling addiction.** (source: [mha.ohio.gov-PSA](http://mha.ohio.gov-PSA))

*Gambling chips were invented as a subtle manipulation tool to make gamblers feel like they are not losing real money.* (Source: [http://pokerterms.com/whoever\\_invented\\_chips\\_was\\_a\\_genius.html](http://pokerterms.com/whoever_invented_chips_was_a_genius.html))

Prevention Department  
500 Fairmeadow Dr.  
Webster City, Iowa 50595

Phone: 515-832-5432  
Fax: 515-832-3221

**We're on the Web!**

**Cfrhelps.org**

*One Life at a Time  
One Day at a Time*

## Problem Gambling Services

Problem Gambling is just as real and just as devastating as addiction to drugs and alcohol. Community and Family Resources understands the insidious nature of this disease and has trained professional counselors who understand the pain it causes.

**Outpatient Treatment:** An individualized treatment plan and schedule is developed to help problem gamblers obtain the goals they have set for themselves.

**Distance Treatment:** To reduce transportation, childcare, and other barriers to attending counseling at one of our facilities, we offer distance gambling treatment by phone and/or computer.

**Crisis Services:** Around the clock crisis services are available and can be accessed by calling any of CFR's offices or the 1-800-BETSOFF phone line.

**Concerned Persons:** Problem gambling causes devastation to families and communities. We offer special outpatient services to non-gamblers that have been affected by gambling. These outpatient services center on the safety, stabilization, and financial recovery of concerned persons.

If you, or someone you know, is suffering, let us provide the help and hope that can break the cycle of destruction. Community and Family Resources is your resource for compassion, help, and hope.