

GAMBLING AND DISORDERED GAMBLING FACTS: CORRECTIONS POPULATION

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit health agency dedicated to providing leadership to reduce the social, financial, and emotional costs of problem gambling, and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including: information and public awareness, community education and professional training, advocacy and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones and the greater community.

TERMS: There are a number of terms used to define gambling and gambling disorders.

- **Gambling:** Activities in which something of value is risked on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning or losing is less than certain.¹
- **Pathological gambling:** *The American Psychiatric Association* classifies pathological gambling as an impulse control disorder and defines it as the “persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior that disrupts personal, family or vocational pursuits” (p. 615).² **Compulsive gambling** is the original lay term for pathological gambling.³
- **Sub-clinical pathological gambling (i.e., problem gambling):** Gambling behavior that does not necessarily meet the criteria for pathological gambling but results in harmful effects to a gambler, his or her family, significant others, friends, co-workers, and others.³
- **Disordered gambling:** A term used to describe the combination of pathological and sub-clinical pathological gambling.³

CORRECTIONS POPULATION GAMBLING PREVALENCE RATES: Studies have estimated the percentage of older adults who gamble as well as the number who have problems as a result of their gambling.

- **Gambling rates:** A meta-analysis estimated that the prevalence of gambling within correctional facilities is 40% and about 22% of inmates gamble weekly.⁴
 - Compared to other population segments, those at correctional facilities are less likely to gamble and gamble recreationally.⁴
- **Disordered gambling rates:** Among those in the corrections population, a meta-analysis reported that 33% of criminal offenders meet criteria for disordered gambling.⁴
 - Compared to other population segments, regular gamblers, sub-clinical pathological gamblers (i.e., problem gamblers) and pathological gamblers are represented at a disproportionately higher rate at correctional facilities.^{4,5}

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISORDERED GAMBLING, INCARCERATION AND CRIME

- Approximately 50% of the crimes committed by incarcerated disordered gamblers are committed to support their gambling.⁴

HELP FOR THOSE WITH GAMBLING PROBLEMS:

Help for people experiencing problems with gambling, their family members, and the greater community is available:

- The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling operates a free, confidential Helpline (800-426-1234) and website: www.masscompulsivegambling.org. In addition, the Mass. Council trains clinicians and maintains a list of professionals who have earned their Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate (MAPGS).
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health funds treatment centers throughout the state.
- Many people experiencing problems with gambling join Gamblers Anonymous (GA) or Bettors Anonymous (BA).
- Spouses, significant others, and family members of people experiencing problems with gambling can attend Gam-Anon, a fellowship that meets to share experiences about living with a disordered gambler.

For more information or to have a packet of materials sent to you, please visit www.masscompulsivegambling.org, call the Helpline (800-426-1234), business line (617-426-4554), e-mail the Council at gambling@aol.com, or visit 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110-3031.

REFERENCES CITED: CORRECTIONS POPULATION FACT SHEET

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