

## GAMBLING AND DISORDERED GAMBLING FACTS: CORRECTIONS POPULATION

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit public health agency dedicated to reducing the social, financial, and emotional costs of gambling-related problems. The Council provides prevention, information, education, advocacy, and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones and the greater community. The Council targets a number of prevention and education efforts towards the corrections population.

**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.<sup>1</sup>
- **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).<sup>2</sup> **Compulsive gambling** is the original lay term for pathological gambling.<sup>3</sup>
- **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.<sup>3</sup>
- **Disordered gambling:** a term used to describe the combination of pathological and sub-clinical pathological gambling.<sup>3</sup>

**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 reported that the prevalence of gambling within correctional facilities is 40%; about 22% of inmates gamble weekly.<sup>4</sup>
  - Compared to other population segments, those at correctional facilities are less likely to gamble and gamble recreationally.<sup>4</sup>
- **Disordered gambling rates:** Among those in the corrections population, a meta-analysis reported that 33% of criminal offenders meet criteria for disordered gambling.<sup>4</sup>
  - 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.<sup>4</sup>

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISORDERED GAMBLING, INCARCERATION AND CRIME

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

## 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](http://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 call the Mass. Council Helpline (800-426-1234), the business line (617-426-4554), e-mail the Council at [gambling@aol.com](mailto:gambling@aol.com), or visit 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110-3031.

## REFERENCES CITED: CORRECTIONS POPULATION FACT SHEET

1. Korn DA, Shaffer HJ. Gambling and the health of the public: Adopting a public health perspective. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. 1999;15(4):289-365.
2. American Psychiatric Association. *DSM-IV: Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. Fourth ed. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association; 1994.
3. National Research Council. *Pathological gambling: a critical review*. Washington D.C.: National Academy Press; 1999.
4. Williams R, Royston J, Hagen B. Gambling and problem gambling within forensic populations. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 2005;32(6):665-689.