



What is Gambling Disorder?

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Oklahoma laws passed in 1988, 2004 and 2005 to allow different types of gambling in Oklahoma. The profits from the Oklahoma lottery benefit its education fund and the general fund. The profits Native American tribes make from casino gambling provide health care and education to their members. A downside to gambling for some people is "gambling disorder." The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health Services estimates that 75,000 Oklahoma adults have some harmful gambling behavior that can range from "problem gambling" to "gambling disorder."

About 50,000 Oklahomans have "problem gambling" behavior that may include one to three of the following symptoms:

- 1) always thinking about gambling,
- 2) loss of control when gambling,
- 3) restlessness, irritability and
- 4) inability to stop gambling.

Another 25,000 Oklahomans meet the conditions for "gambling disorder." Gambling disorder may lead to serious personal and social problems for the gambler. Having more than four of the following symptoms could mean a person has gambling disorder:

- 1) gambling family money that should be used to pay bills and provide for family needs,
- 2) unsuccessful attempts to quit gambling,
- 3) continuous thoughts about gambling,
- 4) more gambling when in a bad mood,
- 5) the need to gamble more after a gambling loss to try to get the lost money back,
- 6) lying to family and friends about whereabouts and how much money was spent on gambling,
- 7) hurting important relationships, skipping school or work to gamble,
- 8) borrowing or stealing money to pay bills or to gamble even more and
- 9) going into debt because of gambling.

The person with gambling disorder eventually may suffer bankruptcy; loss of property (homes, cars or belongings) from repossession or loss of employment.

If young children are involved, those children could suffer from emotional or physical neglect. Children of addicted gamblers are at a higher risk of developing addictions themselves.

When problems with gambling occur, it is important to seek help. The longer problem gambling is allowed to continue, the more damage is done to the gambler's family, finances, employment and relationships. A 20-question quiz to deter-

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are also available on our website at:
facts.okstate.edu



mine the extent of compulsive gambling can be found at the following on-line address: <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/content/20-questions>

Those with a gambling disorder could start by seeing a family doctor who can refer to an expert in the area. Some of the cost of treatment might be covered by health insurance. Treatment is usually in the form of counseling and might include medication to reduce the urge to gamble. Another option would be to call the problem gambling helpline at 1-800-522-4700. Advisors on the helpline could identify the best place to seek help nearby.

In 2018, there were twelve certified problem gambling treatment programs across the state of Oklahoma. The sites and phone numbers for those treatment centers can be found at the following on-line address: https://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/Substance_Abuse/Gambling_Addiction_Services/Gambling_Treatment_Programs.html

A few self-help resources for those who have a gambling disorder are:

- www.gamblersanonymous.org — a free program with regular meeting times to help problem gamblers
- www.gam-anon.org — help for the friends and family who are affected by a gambler's behavior
- www.gamtalk.org — a peer support forum for problem gamblers manned 24 hours a day
- www.oapcg.org — a wealth of information for gambling disorder

It is possible to recover from the addiction of gambling. Thousands of people have done it and now are able to control their urge to gamble. To seek help for a gambling problem or disorder, contact one of the sources listed above.

References

- Gamblers Anonymous -- www.gamblersanonymous.org
Oklahoma Association on Problem and Compulsive Gambling
– www.oapcg.org
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health Services-- www.ok.gov/odmhsas
Oklahoma Gaming Compliance Unit -- https://www.ok.gov/OGC/Frequently_Asked_Questions/

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