

# Older Adult Gambling Fact Sheet

## Older Adult Gambling Prevalence

Research shows that older adults tend to gamble to socialize on excursions, to change their routine, get away for the day and relieve feelings of boredom. <sup>1, 2, 3,</sup>

11

### Recreational gambling rates:

Approximately 28.7% of U.S. adults over the age of 65 gamble recreationally (i.e., they gamble more than 5 times in a year). <sup>4</sup>

### Disordered gambling rates:

Approximately 0.1-1.9% of older adults meet the criteria for disordered gambling. <sup>5</sup>

## Co-occurring Disorders Among Older Adults by Gambler Type

Base: 10,563 US 60+ adults

|                                | Non-Gambler | Recreational Gambler | Gambling Disorder |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Substance Abuse</b>         |             |                      |                   |
| Nicotine Dependence            | 8%          | 17%                  | 43%               |
| Alcohol Use Disorder           | 13%         | 30%                  | 53%               |
| Drug Use Disorder              | 1%          | 1%                   | 5%                |
| <b>Mental Health Disorders</b> |             |                      |                   |
| A Mood Disorder                | 11%         | 13%                  | 40%               |
| An Anxiety Disorder            | 12%         | 15%                  | 35%               |
| A Personality Disorder         | 7%          | 11%                  | 43%               |

Source: National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (Pietrzak)



## CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on PROBLEM GAMBLING

### What is gambling?

Gambling is risking something of value on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning is less than certain.

### What is problem gambling or gambling disorder?

Problem gambling/gambling disorder is characterized by behavior that leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, and the community.

### What is social gambling?

Social gamblers gamble for entertainment, typically will not risk more than they can afford, often gamble with friends, chase losses briefly, gamble for limited periods of time, and are not preoccupied with gambling.

See DSM-5 for more complete clinical definitions.

### The Connecticut Council's Helpline:

(888) 789-7777

### Helpline workers provide:

- Live, confidential, and compassionate support 24-hours a day, 7-days a week
- Referrals to self-help groups, treatment providers, and other community resources

For more information, visit:

<http://www.ccp.org>

## Recreational Gambling, Substance Abuse Problems and Mental Health Disorders

Among older adults, those who have a gambling disorder are significantly more likely than recreational and non-gamblers to also have mental health disorders and/or substance abuse problems.

CONNECTICUT COUNCIL on  
**PROBLEM  
GAMBLING**

# Older Adult Gambling Fact Sheet

## Problem/Disordered Gambling and Poor Health Outcomes

Among older adults, those who have experienced gambling problems are significantly more likely than their counterparts who have not experienced gambling problems to have mental disorders, substance abuse problems and/or poor health outcomes.

- Compared to older adults who do not gamble or gamble but are not problem/disordered gamblers, older adult problem/disordered gamblers are more likely to have the following poor health outcomes:
  - Obesity
  - Worse overall physical health <sup>4</sup>

## Gambling Pros and Cons

Research shows that older adults are at risk to develop problem gambling, but gambling can also be associated with positive outcomes for older adults: <sup>11</sup>

### Some older adult gamblers report:

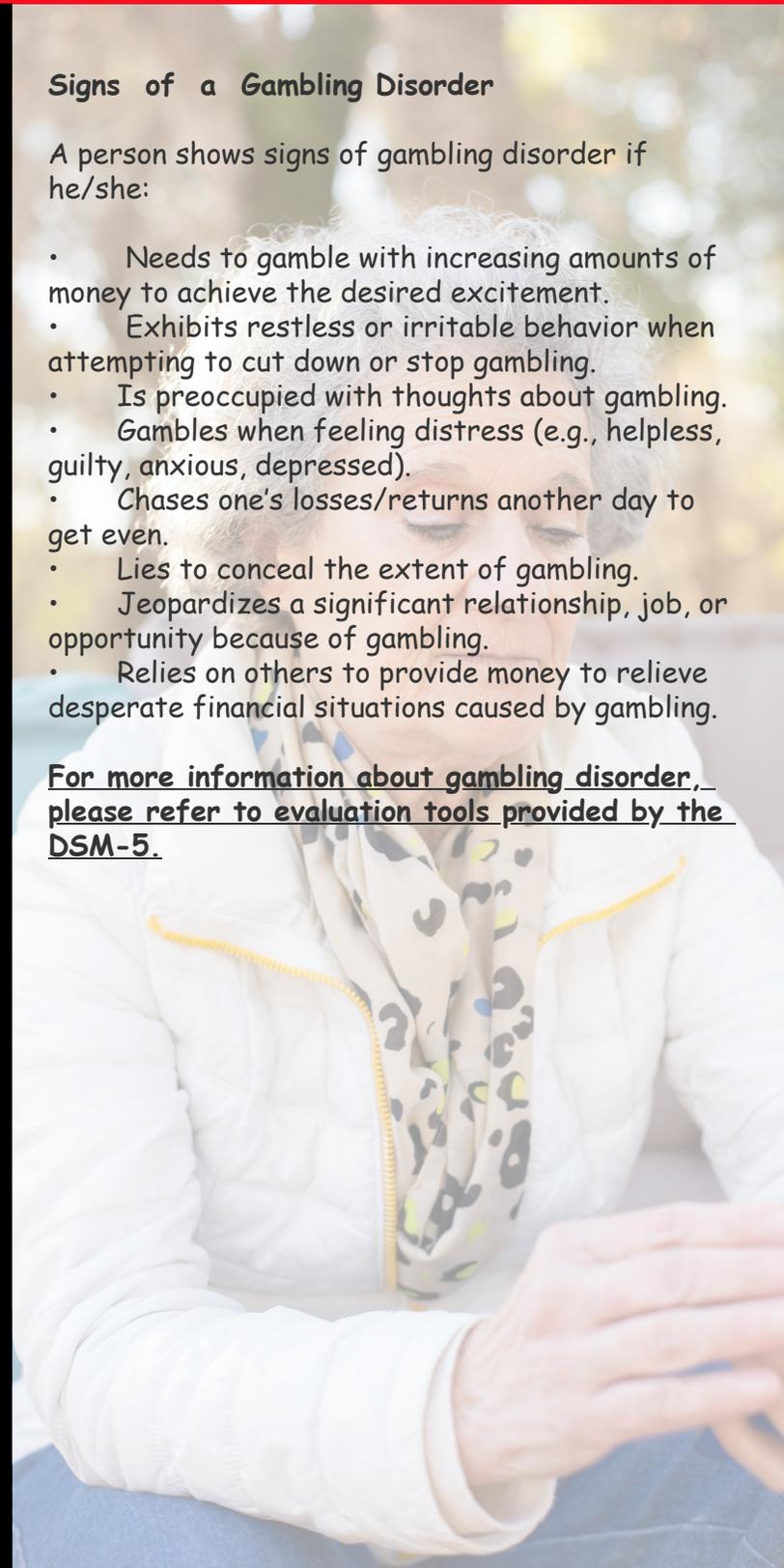
- Better social support (e.g., someone to talk to about problems) <sup>5</sup>
- Lower levels of depression <sup>12</sup>
- Higher self-rated health <sup>4, 12, 13</sup>
- Higher cognitive functioning <sup>4, 12</sup>

## Signs of a Gambling Disorder

A person shows signs of gambling disorder if he/she:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money to achieve the desired excitement.
- Exhibits restless or irritable behavior when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
- Is preoccupied with thoughts about gambling.
- Gambles when feeling distress (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
- Chases one's losses/returns another day to get even.
- Lies to conceal the extent of gambling.
- Jeopardizes a significant relationship, job, or opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

For more information about gambling disorder, please refer to evaluation tools provided by the DSM-5.



# Older Adult Gambling Fact Sheet

## Endnotes

1. Tse, S. et al. Why People Gamble: A Qualitative Study of Four New Zealand Ethnic Groups. *Int. J. Ment. Health Addict.* 10, 849-861 (2012).
2. Hong, S.-I., Sacco, P. & Cunningham-Williams, R. M. An empirical typology of lifetime and current gambling behaviors: association with health status of older adults. *Aging Ment. Health* 13, 265-273 (2009).
3. Tse, S., Hong, S.-I., Wang, C.-W. & Cunningham-Williams, R. M. Gambling Behavior and Problems Among Older Adults: A Systematic Review of Empirical Studies. *J. Gerontol. B. Psychol. Sci. Soc. Sci.* (2012). doi:10.1093/geronb/gbs068
4. Desai, R. A., Desai, M. M. & Potenza, M. N. Gambling, health and age: data from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. *Psychol. Addict. Behav. J. Soc. Psychol. Addict. Behav.* 21, 431-440 (2007).
5. Pilver, C. E. & Potenza, M. N. Increased incidence of cardiovascular conditions among older adults with pathological gambling features in a prospective study, *Addict. Med.* 7, (2013).
6. Martin, F., Lichtenberg, P. A. & Templin, T. N. A Longitudinal Study: Casino Gambling Attitudes, Motivations, and Gambling Patterns Among Urban Elders, *Gambl. Stud. Co-Spons. Natl. Counc. Probl. Gambl. Inst. Study Gambl. Commer. Gaming* 27, 287-297 (2011).
7. [aga\\_sos2013\\_fnl.pdf](http://www.americangaming.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/aga_sos2013_fnl.pdf). at [http://www.americangaming.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/aga\\_sos2013\\_fnl.pdf](http://www.americangaming.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/aga_sos2013_fnl.pdf)
8. Korn, D.A. & Shaffer, H.J. (1999). Gambling and the Health of the Public: Adopting a Public Health Perspective. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 15(4), 289-365.
9. DSM-5: The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. (2013). (5th Ed., pp. 585-586). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing
10. <http://www.naspl.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=content&menuid=33&pageid=1033>
11. Footitt, J. & Anderson, D. Associations between perception of wellness and health-related quality of life, comorbidities, modifiable lifestyle factors and demographics in older Australians. *Australas. J. Ageing* 31, 22-27 (2012).
12. Vander Bilt, J., Dodge, H. H., Pandav, R., Shaffer, H. J. & Ganguli, M. Gambling participation and social support among older adults: a longitudinal community study. *J. Gambl. Stud. Co-Spons. Natl. Counc. Probl. Gambl. Inst. Study Gambl. Commer. Gaming* 20, 373-389 (2004).
13. Desai, R. A., Maciejewski, P. K., Dausey, D. J., Caldarone, B. J. & Potenza, M. N. Health Correlates of Recreational Gambling in Older Adults. *Am. J. Psychiatry* 161, 1672-1679 (2004).