

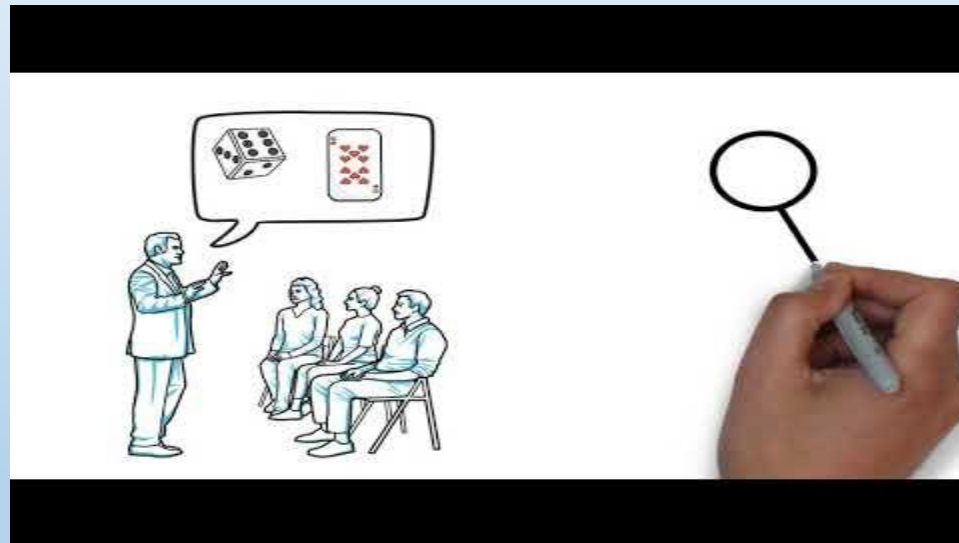


# Gambling as a Co-Occurring Disorder

Jeremy Wampler, LCSW, ICGC II, BACC, CGT, LADC  
Behavioral Health Clinical Manager  
DMHAS, Statewide Services Division  
Problem Gambling Services



# Connecticut Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services Problem Gambling Services



Overview video created by [TTASC](#)

**We are gambling neutral!**



# Definitions



**Responsible Gambling:** Describes the ways in which games of chance are both offered and participated in a socially responsible way that lowers the risk of gambling harms

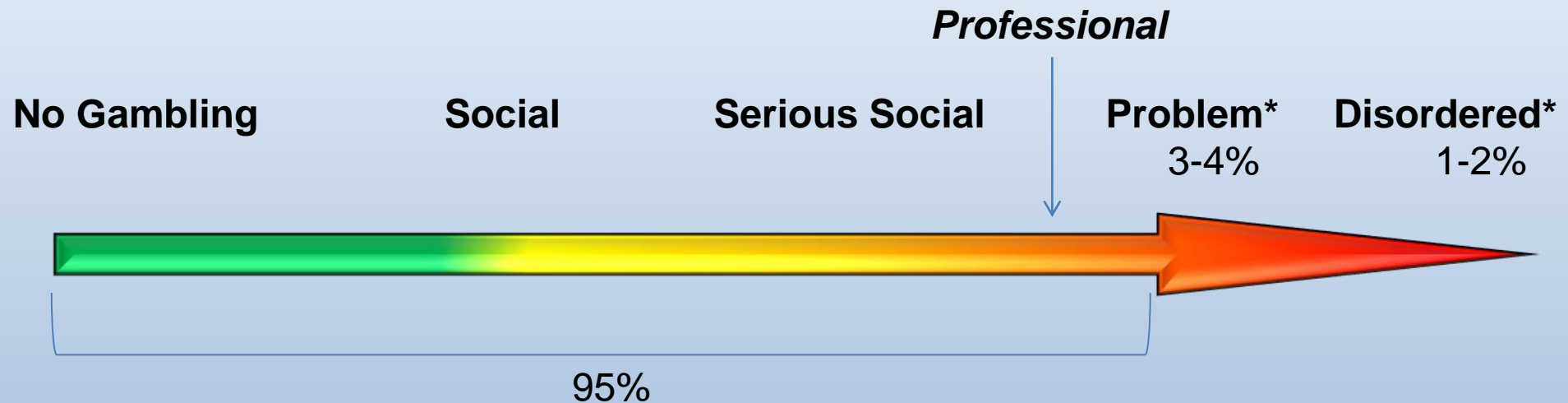


**Problem Gambling:** Pattern of gambling engagement that is so extreme it causes an individual to have important problems in various aspects of their life



**Gambling Disorder:** clinical term relating to a score assessed by a professional using a recognized set of criteria

# The Gambling Continuum



- ❖ Youth increase 2x's
- ❖ Athletes 4x's
- ❖ SA/MH increase 10x's
- ❖ DOC/CJ involved population increase 20x's

# Impacts

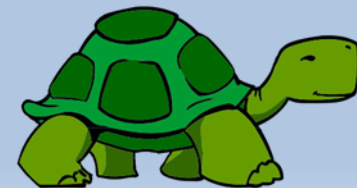
On average, **1** individual working through a gambling addiction impacts an additional **9** people in their families and communities.

National Council on Problem Gambling, 2020 Problem Gambling Awareness Month Bulletin





## **Gambling, Substance Use, & Mental Health**



# DSM-5 Criteria – Gambling Disorder

**Must have 4 or more of the following:**

- Is preoccupied with gambling (relives past experiences...).
- Needs to put increasing amounts to get the same excitement.
- Has repeated, unsuccessful attempts to control, cut back, or stop.
- Becomes restless or irritable when trying to stop gambling.
- Gambles as a way to escape problems or deal with dysphoric mood.
- After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even. (chasing)
- Lies to family/friends/coworkers to hide the extent of gambling losses.
- Has jeopardized, or lost, a significant relationship, job, educational, or career opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide the money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling. (bailouts)

**Is not better explained by a Manic Episode**



# DSM-5 Criteria – Substance Use Disorder

Must have 2 or more of the following within a 12-month period:

- Hazardous use: You've used the substance in ways that are dangerous to yourself and/or others, i.e., overdosed, driven while under the influence, or blacked out.
- Social or interpersonal problems related to use: Your substance use has caused relationship problems or conflicts with others.
- Neglected major roles to use: You've failed to meet your responsibilities at work, school, or home because of your substance use.
- Withdrawal: When you've stopped using the substance, you've experienced withdrawal symptoms.
- Tolerance: You've built up a tolerance to the substance so that you have to use more to get the same effect.
- Used larger amounts/longer: You've started to use larger amounts or use the substance for longer amounts of time.
- Repeated attempts to control use or quit: You've tried to cut back or quit entirely, but haven't been successful.
- Much time spent using: You spend a lot of your time using the substance.
- Physical or psychological problems related to use: Your substance use has led to physical health problems like liver damage or lung cancer, or psychological issues, such as depression or anxiety.
- Activities given up to use: You've skipped activities or stopped doing activities you once enjoyed in order to use the substance.
- Craving: You've experienced cravings for the substance

# Similarities

- ✓ Pre-occupation
- ✓ Tolerance
- ✓ Loss of control
- ✓ Withdrawal
- ✓ Continued use despite neg. consequences
- ✓ Impacting important aspects of life (relationships, work, school, etc.)
- ✓ Impact on the brain

# Substance-Related and Gambling D/O: Similarities

- Substance-related disorders (American Psychiatric Association,2013).
  - “All drugs that are taken in excess have in common direct activation of the **brain reward system**, which is involved in the reinforcement of behaviors and the production of memories. They produce such an intense activation of the reward system that normal activities may be neglected”
- Gambling disorder (American Psychiatric Association,2013).
  - “Gambling behaviors **activate reward systems** similar to those activated by drugs of abuse and produce some behavioral symptoms that appear comparable to the substance use disorders.”

So what's  
different?

- Chasing losses
- Not telling the truth about extent of gambling
- Financial bailouts to cover losses
- Often perceived as a solution
- Fantasies of success/magical thinking
- Unpredictable outcomes/intermittent reward
- Hidden addiction/ appears to be a money problem
- Less public awareness = ***Greater STIGMA!***

# Substance Use Disorders

- Researcher shows problem gambling rates are higher in those with SUDs when compared to the general population.
- 41% of people seeking treatment for gambling problems meet the criteria for lifetime AUD & 21% meet criteria for SUD
- One can trigger the other/ replacement behaviors
- Pre-existing vulnerabilities in brain function, such as in the prefrontal cortex, could be partially to blame. People with high impulsivity scores tend to make rash decisions about both substances and gambling putting them at higher risk of developing a difficult-to-break habit.
- Many individuals with AUD & SUD have been able to achieve sobriety from alcohol & drugs but are unable to control their gambling

(1) Illicit Drug Use and Problem Gambling. International Scholarly Research Notes. <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/isrn/2013/342392/>. August 2013. Accessed May 2022.

(2) Rash, Weinstock, and Van Patten, 2016

# Impacts of Problem Gambling on Mental Health

Across studies, problematic gambling appears to be related to mental health. Individuals who engage in problem gambling behaviors are at least twice as likely to experience a psychiatric condition at some point in their life.



Compared to the general population, among those in mental health, drug and alcohol, family violence, and financial counseling services are between two and 21 times more likely to also present with problematic gambling behaviors.<sup>2,4</sup>



Having experienced clinical anxiety or depression increases the risk of developing problematic gambling behaviors later on among women.<sup>1</sup>



Young adults who are at-risk of and those who are engaging in problematic gambling behaviors are at an increased risk of mental health disorder onset.<sup>5</sup>



Among adolescents, symptoms of anxiety, depression, aggression, and antisocial behavior have been related to being at risk for developing problematic gambling behaviors.<sup>6\*</sup>

75% of individuals who seek treatment for problem gambling have a psychiatric comorbidity.<sup>7</sup>

# Gambling and Trauma

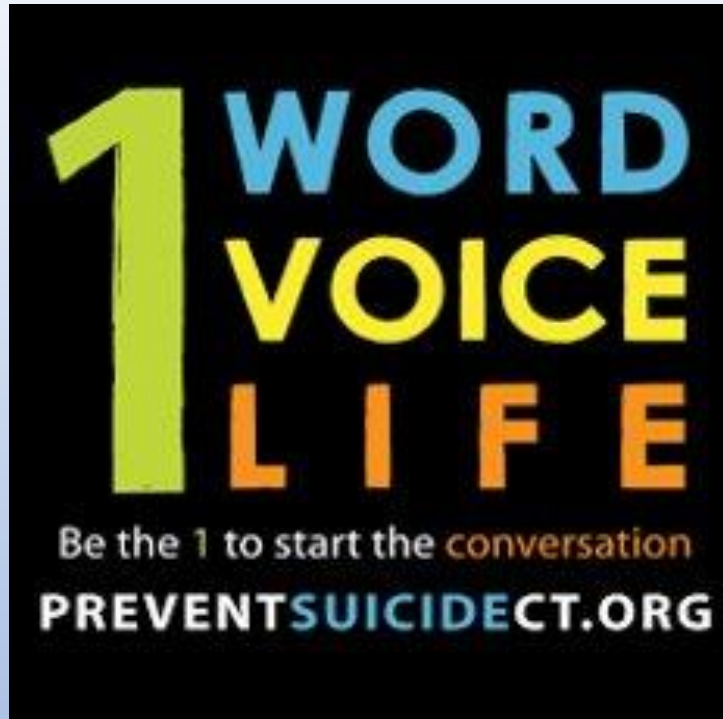
Individuals who met three or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were more than **three times** as likely to report disordered gambling.

(Poole, et al, 2017)



# Rates of Suicide

- In 2019, **4.8%** of adults 18 or older in the U.S. had serious thoughts of suicide and **0.6%** attempted suicide (SAMHSA 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health)
- Individuals with a substance use d/o are nearly **6x's** as likely to attempt suicide. (SAMHSA)
- Up to **50%** of individuals in treatment for gambling disorder have suicidal ideation, and about **17%** have attempted suicide (DSM-5)
- Spouses of gamblers have suicide attempt rates **3x's** higher than the general population.  
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/12/losing-it-all/505814/>)





- Education and Awareness Topics
  - What is considered gambling
  - Risks associated with gambling
  - Understanding the games/odds
  - Keeping the problem out of gambling
  
- Campaigns
  - PGAM
  - Youth PSAs
  
- Resources/Materials
  
- Student/Teacher/Community Education

# Awareness & Education

# Safeguards

Setting Limits

"Cool Off" Periods

Voluntary Self Exclusion

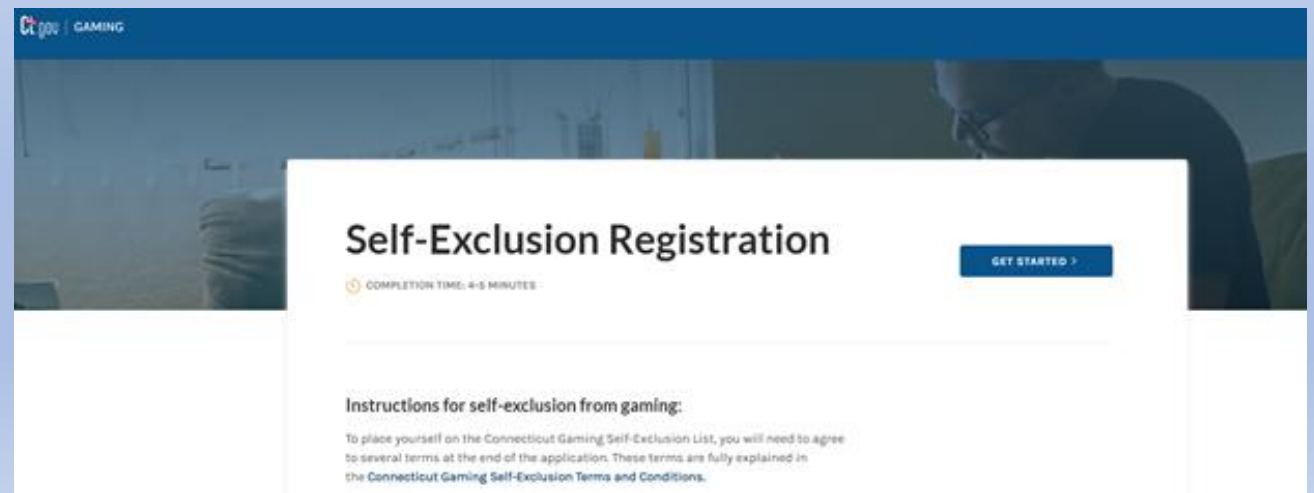
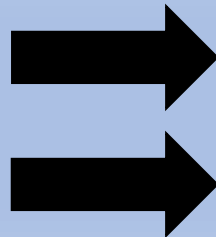
Age Requirements 21+

# Voluntary Self Exclusion

- **What is voluntary self-exclusion?**
- Self-exclusion allows a person to request to be excluded from legalized gaming activities in Connecticut. Individuals who enroll in self-exclusion are prohibited from collecting any winnings, recovering any losses or accepting complimentary gifts or services or any other thing of value from a licensee or operator. Operators may choose to exclude participants in the Connecticut Self-Exclusion list from their services in other states or countries.
- **How can voluntary self-exclusion be helpful?**
- Voluntary self-exclusion can be a beneficial and empowering tool for those who feel they may be developing or have a problem with their gambling. By creating a barrier, it allows those who want to decrease or stop their activity, reduce the harms associated with gambling.

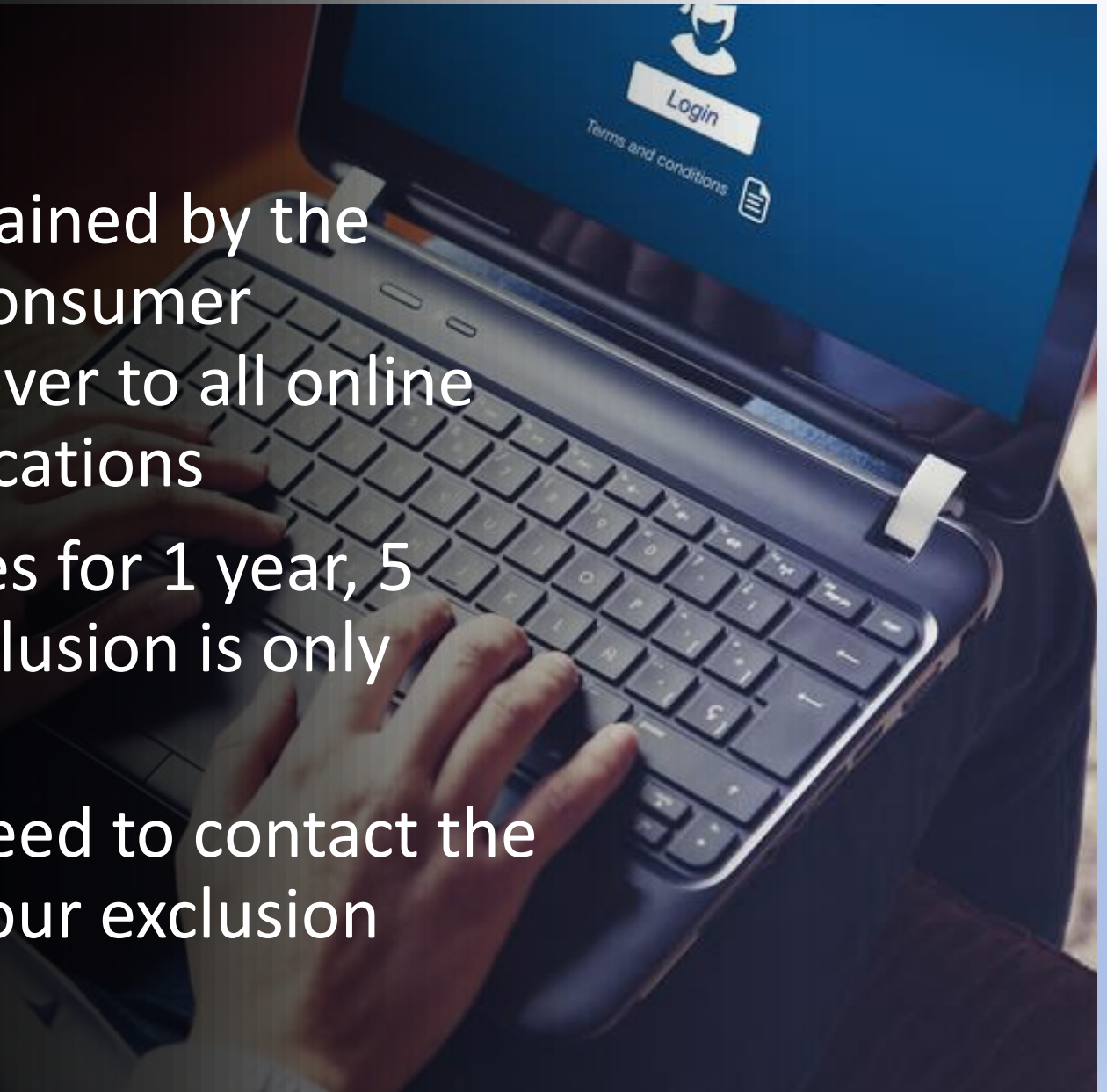
[www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs)

[www.ccp.org](http://www.ccp.org)



## — Self-Exclusion

- The self-exclusion list is maintained by the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) and carries over to all online gaming and retail wagering locations
- Players can exclude themselves for 1 year, 5 years, or lifetime. Lifetime exclusion is only offered through the DCP.
- To request removal you will need to contact the DCP through its portal after your exclusion period is over.





# Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Ambassador Program

A pilot program to address problem gambling concerns specific to Asian American and Pacific Islander population. Goals of the project include:

1. **Identification & training** of representatives of the AAPI communities in Connecticut in gambling awareness & an evidenced-based community conversation model
2. Technical assistance & support of the Ambassadors as they develop, plan and deliver a series of **“community conversations”** engaging their community members
3. Evaluation of the community conversations

**Long term goals of the AAPI Ambassador Program include:**

- Development of an action plan for the replication of the AAPI in other regions
- Replication of this Ambassador model with other underserved populations

# Congregation/Community Assistance Program (CAP)

This 6-hour, interactive training will provide the learner with:

- Education of substance misuse & mental health issues including gambling awareness
- Resources to support persons experiencing behavioral health issues
- The ability to identify & respond to signs/symptoms of problematic substance use, problematic gambling behavior, and other mental health problems/crises such as risk of suicide

# Youth PSAs and Fox61 student news

## How To Talk To About Gambling

Remember - the gambling is the problem, not the person.

- Use "I" language instead of "you, you, you"  
- Tell them how their addiction makes YOU feel  
- Communication is key

### SHOW THEM YOU CARE!

- Convey your support
- Use active listening
- Let them know they are not alone

- Avoid blaming & scolding  
- First try a planter conversation  
- It will take multiple conversations for real change

16% of 7th-12th graders in Naugatuck have gambled in the past 12 months







JUNE 1, 2022



# 2022 FOX61 Student News Awards winners and nominees

MORE VIDEOS

1:27 / 1:29

# Responsible Gambling Campaign



Gambling Problem? Help is available.  
Call 888.789.7777 or visit [ccpg.org](http://ccpg.org)

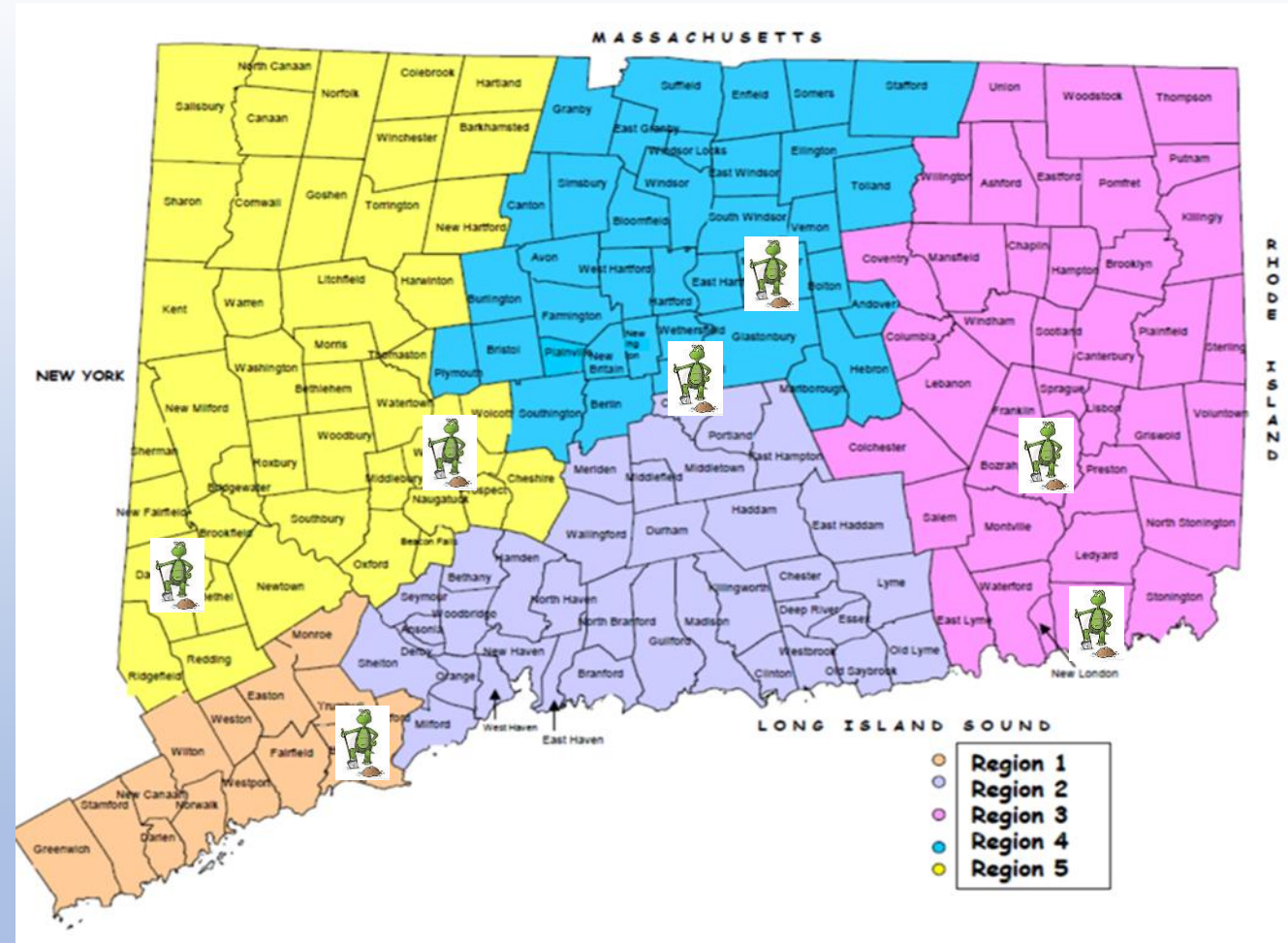
## WHAT IS RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING?

**Gambling responsibly means taking steps to reduce risks or harms to yourself that can occur when gambling.**

There are those that can get themselves into trouble financially, for others their gambling can cause issues with friends and family, or some may drink too much and/or use other substances while they play. It's important to remember that all gambling activities have risk and to enjoy a safer playing experience, you must be aware of the risks and how you can minimize them. Using strategies when you gamble like setting a budget before you leave your house, taking breaks, and educating yourself on how the games work are just a few tips on being the safest and smartest player that you can be.



# Disordered Gambling Integration (DiGIn) programs



## DiGIn Sites

- Recovery Network of Programs - Bridgeport
- Natchaug Hospital – Mansfield
- The Connection, Inc. - Norwich
- CCAR – Manchester
- State Dept. of Veterans Affairs – Rocky Hill
- Apex - Danbury
- CNV Help - Waterbury

# Why Integration is Important

- Gambling at first mention is not seen as problematic.
  - Problem Gambling is often seen as relational to negative outcomes, not addiction.
- When pressed addiction/ gambling are seen as having similarities.
- Gambling is legal, government sponsored and embedded in a variety of cultures (religion, ethnic) increasing belief that it is a safe, acceptable form of entertainment.
- Help is known (back of lotto tickets, advertisements) but lack of public knowledge and awareness leads to under-utilization.

# Assessing Impact on Recovery

- Beyond diagnosis and labeling
- Integrate gambling throughout the assessment in addition to specific screening items
- In what ways does gambling support or detract from recovery?
- In what ways does gambling support or detract from life goals?
- In what ways does gambling support or detract from your probation?

# Recovery Support Services

- Speakers Bureau
- Community Outreach
- Social media events
- Agency/group presentations
- Scholarships for Recovery Coach Academy and Recovery University
- Peer Collaborative



## Region 1

---

**Stamford, Norwalk,  
Bridgeport**



## Region 2

---

**Branford, Milford &  
Ansonia**



## Region 3

---

**Norwich, New  
London, Plainfield**



## Region 4

---



## Region 5

---

Better  
Choice  
Treatment  
Programs

# Help is Available



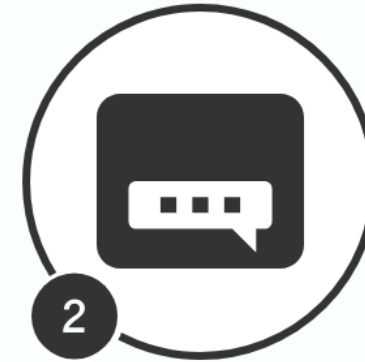
## Struggling with Problem Gambling?

**Help Is Available.**



Call **1.888.789.7777**

If you or someone you care about has a gambling problem and you are seeking resources and help, call our free, confidential helpline 24-hours a day, 7 days a week at **1-888-789-7777**



Text **CTGAMB** to 53342

Don't want to call us? Text CTGAMB to 53342. Professional counselors respond directly to text messages 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, including holidays and weekends



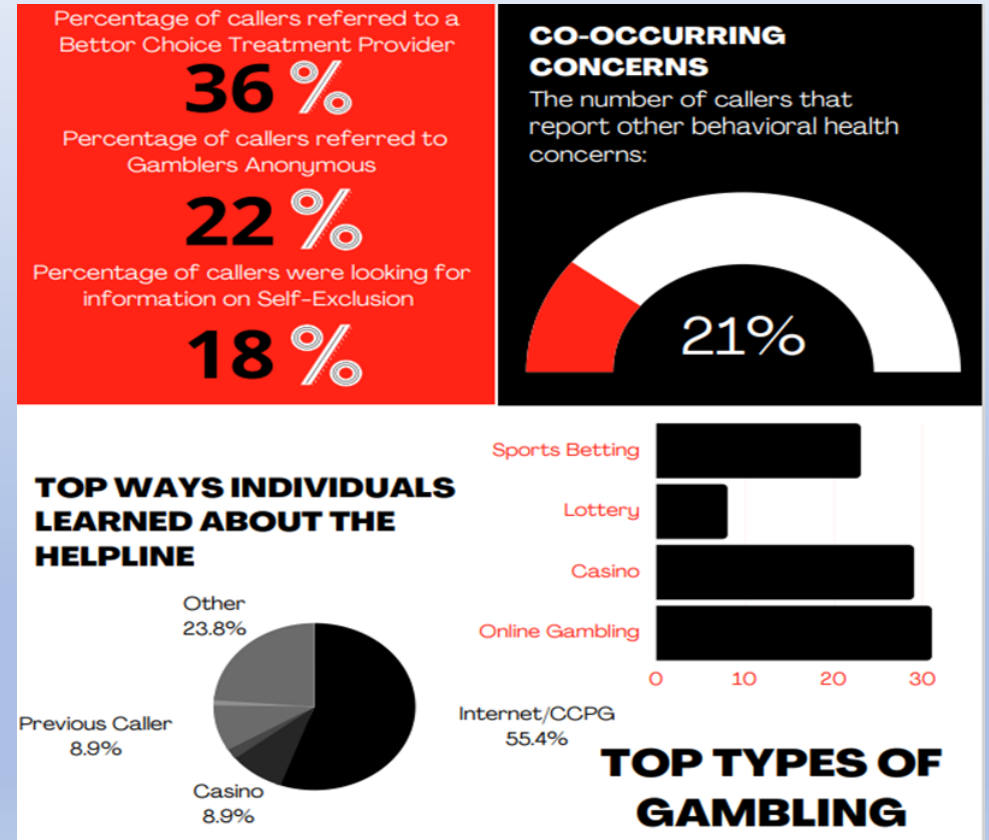
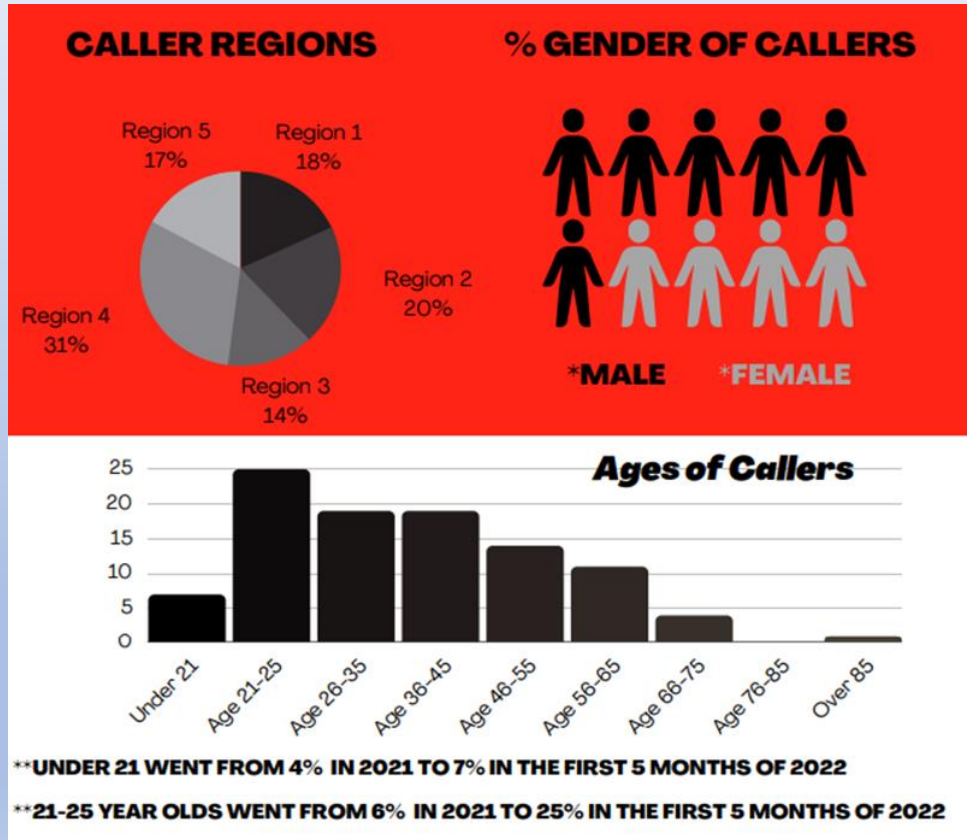
Live Chat - **ccpg.org/chat**

Our Live Chat is an alternative for those who are more comfortable chatting online. Live Chat provides support and referrals for the problem gambler and others impacted (family, friends, co-workers, employers)



# Statewide Helpline Data

January – May 2022



# Resources:

Gambler's Anonymous

<https://ctwmaga.org>

Gam-anon

<https://gam-anon.org>

Gambling Recovery Support Services: Stephen Matos  
[Smatos@mccaonline.com](mailto:Smatos@mccaonline.com)

CT Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)

<https://ccar.us>

National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG)

<https://www.ncpgambling.org/>

Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG)

<https://ccpg.org/>

Jeremy Wampler, LCSW, LADC, ICGC-II, CGT, BACC  
DMHAS, Problem Gambling Services  
[Jeremy.Wampler@ct.gov](mailto:Jeremy.Wampler@ct.gov)

Fiorigio (Fred) Fetta, LPC, ICGC-II, CGT, BACC, AADC  
DMHAS, Problem Gambling Services  
[Fiorigio.Fetta@ct.gov](mailto:Fiorigio.Fetta@ct.gov)

Kelly Leppard, CPS  
DMHAS, Problem Gambling Services  
[Kelly.Leppard@ct.gov](mailto:Kelly.Leppard@ct.gov)



Questions?