

## Gambling and the Criminal Justice System Fact Sheet

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The State of Connecticut spends over \$50,000 per year to incarcerate each inmate,<sup>1</sup> and gambling is common in criminal justice populations.

- Over one-third of inmates gamble while incarcerated.<sup>2,3</sup>
- An estimated 33% of inmates have gambling problems,<sup>2,4</sup> with rates as high as 49% in older adult inmates.<sup>5</sup>
- Over half of inmates with gambling disorder report that their incarceration resulted directly from gambling-related crimes.<sup>2,3</sup>

Up to half of persons with severe gambling disorder commit illegal acts to support their gambling.<sup>2,6</sup>

- The most common illegal acts include writing bad checks and stealing or “borrowing” money or goods from friends or relatives, often with the intent of returning it.<sup>7</sup>
- Embezzlement is rare, but gambling-related fraud and embezzlement cases are growing especially in regions close to casinos.<sup>8</sup>
- Violent non-income generating crimes are also related to gambling disorder, and nearly two-thirds of persons with gambling disorder are perpetrators or victims of violence.<sup>9</sup>

Gambling and substance use disorders commonly occur together.

- Substance use disorders increase the likelihood of a gambling disorder by more than 4-fold.<sup>10</sup> Over 20% of persons with substance use disorders have gambling problems.<sup>11</sup>
- Gambling and substance use significantly increase suicidality, and up to one-third of persons with gambling disorder attempt suicide.<sup>12</sup>

**Despite the prevalence of gambling and related problems,  
almost no one in the criminal justice system receives treatment for gambling.**

Treatment for gambling can be very effective.

- Over 75% of persons treated for gambling substantially reduce their gambling.<sup>13-15</sup>
- Psychiatric distress and symptoms decrease markedly with gambling treatment.<sup>13,15</sup>
- Gambling treatment clients who commit illegal acts to support their gambling respond as well to treatment as gamblers who do not commit illegal acts.<sup>7</sup>

### **Suggested action steps:**

1. Screen criminal justice system clients for gambling problems using established and confidential methods.<sup>3,5</sup>
2. Provide appropriate interventions to persons identified with gambling problems. Assessment and brief interventions can markedly reduce gambling, even in problem gamblers not specifically seeking gambling treatment.<sup>16</sup>