

**THE NEW YORK COUNCIL ON PROBLEM
GAMBLING COLLEGE AGE GAMBLING
SYMPOSIUM**

Hope for You and Yours

REPORT SUMMARY

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Albany, New York



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report provides an overview of the **College Age Gambling Symposium** held in Albany, New York on March 12, 2007 by the New York Council on Problem Gambling as part of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services **HEALTHY CAMPUS COMMUNITIES: Looking to the Future – A College Alcohol, Other Drugs & Violence Prevention Conference**.

The New York Council on Problem Gambling would like to thank presenters and participants who provided the insight, energy and professional experience for a successful symposium. Furthermore, the New York Council on Problem Gambling would like to extend a special thank you to the **HEALTHY CAMPUS COMMUNITIES** Conference Committee for allowing the New York Council on Problem Gambling to hold our **College Age Gambling Symposium** at their event.

INTRODUCTION

The New York Council on Problem Gambling History and Mission Statement

In 1972, the Board of Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous in the New York City area requested their Spiritual Advisor, Monsignor Dunne to establish a Council on Compulsive Gambling to do what they could not do because of anonymity – call national attention to the increasing problem of compulsive gambling in the United States. The National Council on Problem Gambling was founded at that time and in 1975, was chartered as a nonprofit organization. Initially organized by an alliance of health professionals and recovering gamblers, the National benefited from the work of pioneers such as Dr. Robert Custer and Monsignor Joseph Dunne of New York. Up until the National Council decided to relocate its headquarters to Washington, D.C., the National Council and the New York Council on Problem Gambling were in essence one and the same. In fact, money was provided by the New York State Office of Mental Health to maintain the National Council on Problem Gambling Helpline (1-800-437-1611). The New York Council on Problem Gambling was formally incorporated in 1995.

The New York Council on Problem Gambling is a not-for-profit corporation, under contract with the State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, dedicated to increasing public awareness about problem and compulsive gambling and advocating for support services and treatment for persons adversely affected by gambling.

Defining Problem Gambling Among College Age Gamblers

A variety of terms have been used in the gambling research literature to refer to difficulties caused by an individual's gambling. The most widely used term is problem gambling although it has been used in different ways in the literature (Lesieur & Rosenthal 1991; Rosecrance 1988). The term pathological gambling is generally limited to the psychiatric disorder first recognized by the medical profession in 1980 and most recently revised in 1994 (American Psychiatric Association 1980, 1994). Research on adult gambling problems suggests that pathological gambling has strong antecedents in youthful gambling involvement (Custer & Milt 1985; Volberg 1994).

Pathological Gambling DSM: 312.31 is:

- a progressive disorder
- an individual who has a psychologically uncontrollable preoccupation with an urge to gamble resulting in damage to vocational, family and social interests characterized by a chronic and progressive inability to resist the impulse to gamble
- an impulse control disorder in the DSM since 1980

Pathological Gambling Diagnosis

(Must meet 5 out of 10 criteria)

- Increase bets to sustain thrill
- Exhibits agitation when cutting back
- Chases losses
- Lies to conceal activity
- Finances bets through illegal acts
- Jeopardizes significant relationships
- Relies on financial bailout
- Fails in effort to control or stop
- Gambles to escape from problems
- Preoccupied with gambling

The National Council on Problem Gambling uses the term problem gambling to indicate all of the patterns of gambling behavior that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits (National Council on Problem Gambling 1997). Since this definition is equally applicable to adults and adolescents, this is the meaning intended by the term throughout this report. In discussing the results of the symposium, problem gambling refers to the most serious classification of college age gamblers; those who show the clearest evidence of gambling involvement that has compromised, disrupted or damaged other important areas in their lives.

Today's college students live in a culture more accepting of gambling than any previous generation. Poker on campus has experienced an unprecedented popularity as has betting over the Internet and Scratch-Offs. For most college students, gambling is a social or recreational activity. However, it is not without risk. Prevalence rates of problem and pathological gambling among college students are among the highest of any segment of the population. Scratch-Offs is the most preferred type of actual gambling. The New York State Lottery has provided an unprecedented increase in access to legalized gambling at most convenience and grocery stores, through vending machines located in stores and malls. (Aasved 2003; Lesieur 1984)

Gambling problems threaten academic success, financial well-being and overall health. Out of the variety of harms that college students are at-risk for, problem gambling is perhaps the most overlooked.

The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has stated that problem gambling should be a concern for all students, not just student athletes. NASPA urges college officials to increase their awareness of the potential health risks associated with gambling and further recommends that materials related to problem gambling be integrated into student prevention and treatment programs.

For decades the problem of gambling behavior among college students has been festering just beneath the awareness of public and university leaders. Indeed, gambling among college students is probably the most prevalent of student behaviors receiving the least amount of attention (Dunne, 1985; Shaffer, Forman, Scanlan, & Smith, 2000).

There have been a few large-scale prevalence studies and reviews that have all confirmed the increased prevalence rates of the college age gambler. A 2001 Harvard study of college-age gamblers estimated them to be three times more at risk for problem gambling than adults. (Shaffer & Hall 2001) Other studies and literature helping to bring this important issue to the forefront are listed below:

- 1. Kerber, Cynthia Sullivan. (2005) Problem and pathological gambling among college athletes. *Annual of Clinical Psychiatry*. 17 (4); 243-7.**

College athletes SOGS scores indicate that 15% have either problem or pathological gambling problem. Additionally, SOGS suggest that about one-third of the respondents who had engaged in some form of gambling indicated that they had gambled more than they had intended. The results of the study recommend that methods need to be developed to enhance education about the hazards of gambling for college students.

2. Shaffer, h., Donato, A., Labrie, R., Kidman, R., and LaPlante, D. (2005).

The results found that although all schools had a student alcohol use policy, only 26 schools (22%) had a gambling policy. Research suggests that gambling on college campuses is commonplace. Despite the frequency with which college students engage in gambling activities, some evidence suggests that administrators are unaware of the dangers associated with excessive gambling among students. Since there are few college gambling related policies, schools might be missing an opportunity to inform students about the dangers of excessive gambling.

3. The rate for monthly card playing by 14-22 year old males increased 20% between the 2004 and 2005 survey National Annenberg Risk Survey of Youth.

According to the latest estimates, approximately 2.9 million young people between the ages of 14 and 22 are gambling on cards on a weekly basis. Over 80 percent are male. Those who play cards are also more likely than other gamblers to gamble on the Internet.

Monthly card gambling increased from 34.7 percent to 41.6 percent, a 20% increase. The rate of card playing was found to be higher among youth who attend schools. 14 percent of male high school youth reported gambling on cards at least once a week and 15.4 percent of college youth reported the same activity. Monthly gambling among high school and college males was 37 percent and 50.4 percent. Gambling on cards also seems to be attracting more young people to gambling. Monthly rates of total gambling in young men increased from 48.2 percent in 2004 to 57.1 percent in 2005. Based on the latest estimates, approximately 580,000 young people ages 14 to 22 gamble on the Internet on a weekly basis. Most of these young people are under age 21.

4. Engwall, D., Hunter, R. and Steinberg, M. (2004). Gambling and other risk behaviors on university campuses. Journal of American College Health. 52 (6); 245-255.

Using the South Oaks Gambling Screen, they found that 18 percent of men and 4 percent of women reported that gambling had led to at least 3 negative life consequences, commonly defined as problem gambling. Students who were identified as problem gamblers, compared with other students, were significantly more likely to be heavy drinkers, report negative consequences of alcohol consumption, and be regular tobacco and marijuana users. University athletes were also found to have significantly greater problem gambling rates than non-athletes.

Inherent Problems of College Age Gambling

Gambling often begins as a recreational activity, such as playing Texas Hold'em poker, pitching coins, and betting on sporting events. The new craze of Texas Hold'em poker is taking over. Stimulated by the fascination of televised poker tournament's large payouts, teens are hosting their own poker games sanctioned by their parents who feel at least they are not drinking or drugging. Colleges throughout the state are also hosting Texas Hold'em nights as a form of recreation for their students.

Today, children and adolescents are educated about the dangers inherent in smoking, alcohol, and drug consumption. Few, however, are informed to understand the potentially addictive qualities inherent in gambling activities.

College age gamblers are becoming addicted to gambling at alarming rates. As we enter the twenty-first century, we must come to realize that the development of the Internet is a significant discovery that many businesses are using to capitalize on its market potential. The gambling industry is one of these businesses. As a result, many college age gamblers have gained easy access to gambling using the Internet. This access puts them at risk to have or develop a gambling problem.

Warning Signs

If you or someone affecting your life can answer "yes" to any of the following questions, please seek further information about problem gambling.

- Preoccupied with gambling (i.e. reliving past gambling experiences, planning the next venture, or thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble)
- Using financial aid money for gambling or to replace money lost at gambling.
- Missing classes, work or social events because of gambling.
- Jeopardizing or losing a significant relationship, job or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
- Feeling the need to bet more and more money to get the desired effect.
- Lying about the extent of gambling.
- Trying unsuccessfully to control, cut back or stop gambling.
- Gambling as a way of escaping emotional or physical pain.
- Relying on family members, roommates, friends or others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling.
- Gambling to try to get your money back.

College Age Gambling Symposium

The New York Council on Problem Gambling's **College Age Gambling Symposium** provided a setting for examination of issues related to the current concern with college age gambling. This symposium highlighted critical issues of college age gambling and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.

Dr. Carlos Blanco, Director of Gambling Disorders Clinic at Columbia University New York, New York and *Dr. James Schaefer*, Director, SUNY Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention SUNY System Administration, President, James M Schaefer & Associates, LLC Schenectady, NY presented the findings of the College-Age Gambling Survey 2006 and the New York Council on Problem Gambling Problem Gambling in College: Facts and Challenges Survey at the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services **HEALTHY CAMPUS COMMUNITIES: Looking to the Future – A College Alcohol, Other Drugs & Violence Prevention Conference**.

Drs. Blanco and Schaefer gave a one and one-half hour presentation, Problem Gambling in College: Facts and Challenges (Appendix B). The approximately *100 participants*, who make up the Advisory Committee, were then asked to form seven breakout groups and discuss the following **Six Points of Interest**:

1. Identify the current collegiate gambling issues and problems that you are aware of (e.g., populations affected, service needs, information needs, lack of awareness).
2. What role, if any, should public relations & the media play in raising the awareness of collegiate problem gambling?
3. Is there a need for problem gambling education on our campuses, when and how should it be implemented?
4. What additional research is needed to properly address the issue of college-age gambling?
5. What are the priorities, if any, for training college campus professionals regarding student problem gambling?
6. What can universities and colleges do to help?

One participant in each breakout group was asked to take notes and report back to the full group.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Advisory Committee Findings Summary

The exponential development of college age gambling has already demonstrated the tremendous potential for damaging individuals, families and communities. The Advisory Committee assessed the state of college age gambling in New York, and believes that the progression of college age gambling has taken a turn for the worse. College age gambling has become the norm. To reverse the norm, successful prevention strategies that incorporate the risk and protective factors that were used to combat adolescent alcohol and cigarette use must be utilized and implemented throughout the state. Prevention, education and treatment that are research based have been proven to work. If this is not done, college age problem gambling will surely continue to increase.

Historically, the continuity of problem gambling programs in New York has been threatened on an annual basis. Consideration must be given to establishing a dedicated funding mechanism using gambling revenues to provide for problem gambling prevention, education, research and treatment programs in New York State.

Assessment of the Symposium's Six Points of Interest

Identify the current collegiate gambling issues and problems that you are aware of (e.g., populations affected, service needs, information needs, lack of awareness).

Issues & problems:

- College Age Gambling has definitely increased.
- Gambling is more accessible than ever before (e.g. Texas Hold'em Poker, & Internet).
- Socially acceptable (Casino Nights, Texas Hold'em Tournaments).
- Availability of Money (high availability of credit cards).
- Few Prevention, Education, Treatment, and Research resources (e.g. Faculty/Staff/Parents/Students need education and add gambling questions to CORE Survey).
- Lack of leadership & direction on how to address the issue of College Age Gambling. (Need for Campus Gambling Policy).
- College and graduate degree requirements should include courses on Problem Gambling.

What role, if any, should public relations & the media play in raising the awareness of collegiate gambling?

Media's role:

- Current Role:
 1. It is a one-sided message: Promotion of gambling without recognizing the down-side of gambling.
 2. The advertisement media promotes instant gratification (e.g. bottle caps, scratch-offs, games/toys, glamour of Texas Hold'em).
 3. The news media promotes the positive side and economic benefits of gambling rather than the social costs.
- Balanced Role:
 1. Media should be educators and corporate citizens. There needs to be a message making people aware that there is help. All gambling ads should include a prevention message – not just the New York Council on Problem Gambling 24-Hour Helpline number (1-800-437-1611) but warning signs.
 2. Development of a statewide media awareness campaign regarding college age problem gambling.
 3. Attachment of an awareness message including New York Council on Problem Gambling 24-Hour Helpline number (1-800-437-1611) and warning signs whenever there is gambling advertisement

Is there a need for problem gambling education on our campuses, when and how should it be implemented?

Need for education:

- The onset of gambling occurs most often between the ages of 10 and 12. Problem Gambling is a disease of progression.
- Recognition of college age gambling as a public health issue.
- Establishment of a unambiguous campus gambling policy

Implementation:

- Develop and implement a college age Problem Gambling Prevention Program on all campuses beginning with freshman orientation.
- Educate Student Life Counselors, Staff, Faculty, Coaches, Administrators, Parents and Students.
- Establish a campus gambling policy

What additional research is needed to properly address the issue of college age gambling?

Symposium Participants evaluated the need for research and found that there is not nearly enough research devoted to the issue of college age gambling in New York.

What should be done:

- More research on college age gambling and effective prevention and treatment specifically targeting at-risk groups.
- Research the effects that the media and internet have on the college age population.
- Needs assessment.
- Develop screening and assessment tools.

What are the priorities, if any, for training college campus professionals regarding student problem gambling?

Symposium Participants strongly believe those who come in contact with students have not received appropriate education to deal with problem gambling and that trainings need to be provided so that staff, faculty, residential assistants, student counseling services and campus chaplains so that sufficient professional services can be offered to meet the demands of persons in need.

Priorities

- Online Trainings
- Add gambling screening questions to counseling center intake form
- Consciousness raising of risk factors
- Accessing local resources

What can universities and colleges do to help?

Most of the college age population knows little or nothing about the consequences of gambling and gambling problems. Gambling is looked upon as a harmless pastime, with little hazard other than the loss of a few dollars. Symposium Participants believe that college administrators, faculty, student counseling services, chaplains and Residential Assistants may not be aware that a student is in need of help or that help is available. Campus educational programs, information and research dealing with gambling and related problems are needed.

Call to Action

- Institute a Gambling Policy
- Offer Trainings
- Fund Research
- Raise Awareness
- Curriculum infusion - freshman orientation
- Make treatment center information available

Conclusion

The New York Council on Problem Gambling revealed startling conclusions regarding college age gambling at its “College Age Gambling Symposium” during HEALTHY CAMPUS COMMUNITIES: Looking to the Future – A College Alcohol, Other Drugs & Violence Prevention Conference in Albany.

Gambling is a pastime that can develop into a ruinous problem that can affect anybody. We need increased efforts to prevent problem gambling in New York. The main purpose of this Symposium was to assess the level of problematic gambling among the college age population in New York. This information is vital in understanding the development of gambling problems among New York citizens as well as in developing services for the college age population in the state. The college age population represents a generation for whom legal gambling has been available all their lives. However, young people are unlikely to have developed skills and strategies to manage their gambling and are thus more likely to develop difficulties.

This report represents a significant step forward in our knowledge of college age gambling problems. It provides a benchmark for future assessments of gambling and problem gambling among the college age population in New York. This report also provides a foundation for policy making and planning for problem gambling prevention, education, research and treatment services for the college age population. Consideration must now be given to educate New York college age gamblers about the risks of gambling, to provide problem gambling prevention services, to offer problem gambling treatment services, and to ensure that adequate and continuing problem gambling funds for such efforts are made available.

Based on the results of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) survey of students in grades 7-12, a total of 20 percent of students are currently at risk for developing a gambling problem and 10 percent of these youth may need treatment for a gambling problem. (See Appendixes C&D)

Males surveyed were nearly twice as likely as females to have gambled within the past 30 days. The survey also indicates that, of those students in grades 7-12 identified with a substance abuse problem, almost half (42%) also had a gambling problem. (See Appendixes C&D)

There's been a vast increase in gambling in high schools and colleges, and unfortunately young people haven't been prepared or warned about how a seemingly harmless pastime can end in a dangerous addiction for some. Little attention has been given to college age populations.

It is important to study gambling in college age populations because there is evidence that college age gamblers are more likely to have problems related to gambling than adults (Platz, Laurie, Millar, Murray, 2001). In addition, most pathological gamblers report beginning gambling during this age (Platz, Laurie, Millar, Murray, 2001). Interventions designed to deal with pathological gambling may be most effective when focused on college age populations, i.e., before pathological gambling patterns well established.

For many, the word gambling brings to mind middle-age men at racetracks or on the phone with their bookies. But times are changing and the familiar face of gambling is quickly being replaced by a younger, more affluent one. This transition has caught many by surprise.

Complicating things even further is the Internet taking gambling to a new playing screen allowing anyone to place bets, anytime, anywhere. Online gambling only takes a credit card or debit card and an Internet connection, putting just about every college student at risk – turning their laptops into a portable casino.

Colleges have taken major steps towards educating students to prevent binge drinking or unprotected sex. Steps need to be taken to prevent college age gambling especially with so many adolescents reported having problems.

NEW YORK COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING RECOMMENDATIONS

(These recommendations are the sole opinion of the New York Council on Problem Gambling and do not reflect the opinions of the participants who attended the College Age Gambling Symposium.)

- Establish **focus groups** to assess the impact of gambling on college age population.
- Develop a **Awareness Campaign**
 - Educate campus counseling services and have materials available on problem gambling warning signs and resources for problem gambling side-by-side with information on other risky behaviors.
 - Curriculum infusion: include problem gambling with addictions courses especially for incoming freshmen. Include responsible gambling guidelines.
 - Resident hall advisor training to recognize warning signs of problem gambling and be familiar with resources.
- Create and Implement a **Campus Gambling Policy**
 - Enforce school policies related to underage gambling. If none exist, work to create them.
 - Encourage participation in surveys and studies in order to elevate the knowledge of how gambling is affecting college-age students from anecdote to fact.
- Increase funding opportunities for **research** to properly identify and address the needs of college age gambler and problem gambling in New York.
- Encourage the Media to **balance** its **reporting**.
- Enactment of a **dedicated New York State revenue source** for the express purpose of providing comprehensive treatment and prevention programs designed to address problem and pathological gambling.
- Begin **screening** to include at a minimum the 2 question “Lie/Bet tool to rule out problem gambling behaviors any time a student is screened for any risky behavior for any reason.”
 - “Lie/Bet” questions:
 1. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
 2. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?

Students who answer “yes” to one of these questions should be referred for further evaluation. For treatment providers in New York State, call 1.800.437.1611

APPENDIX A

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