

## A Local Approach to Preventing Underage and Problem Gambling in CT

### Gambling Prevalence

According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, approximately 85% of U.S adults have gambled at least once in their lifetime; 60% in the past year. Some form of gambling is legal in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Data from the CT 2020 Young Adult Statewide survey indicated that 35.2% of young adults ages 18-25 reported gambling in the past year. The CT School Health Survey assesses risky behaviors including gambling. In 2019 25.4% of those surveyed reported gambling on a sports team, playing cards or dice, gambling on the internet, or participating in the lottery.

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

Here in CT, the legal age to gamble is 21 to participate in online or in-person casino gaming or sports wagering. Those 18 and older can participate in Fantasy Sports, lottery, and Keno.

Problem Gambling or Gambling Disorder is characterized by behavior that leads to adverse consequences for the individual, families, and society.

Signs include a preoccupation with gambling, chasing losses, and work or relationships disruptions.

**3-4% of the population will fall into the category of problem gambling.** 1.5-2% will meet the criteria for gambling disorder as defined by Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition. The U.S census reports CT total population as 3,606M. That means up to 144,240 people experience problem gambling and up to 72,120 will fall in the category of disordered gambling in our state. Co-occurring disorders like depression, anxiety and substance misuse are common among those who struggle with problem gambling.

Gambling is not a risk-free activity which means that anyone can develop a problem with gambling.

**Prevention is important.** It's about providing education so people can make informed decisions and it's about reducing harm.

### The Regional Problem Gambling Awareness Teams

Problem gambling prevention is implemented through the 5 Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs) in CT. The RBHAOs are strategic community partners addressing behavioral health needs across the lifespan. Through funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), they raise awareness and provide advocacy to the public related to mental health promotion, suicide prevention and response, and substance misuse prevention, treatment, and recovery.

**Because of the relationships built with local community partners, the RBHAOs are positioned well to build capacity and raise awareness to address problem gambling.**

We do this by building and strengthening Problem Gambling Awareness Teams (PGATs). The 5 Regional PGATs are made up of community stakeholders including prevention professionals, treatment providers, those in recovery, youth-serving organizations, schools and other community groups. PGATs meet bi-monthly to discuss gambling trends and develop plans for education and awareness and sharing resources. We host trainings and webinars and disseminate information through our webpages, newsletters, social media, and at local events. We collaborate with youth-serving organizations to support Youth Gambling Awareness Media Projects. The youth groups participate in gambling awareness trainings, assess gambling behaviors at the local level and develop a prevention message through media such as video, audio, social media, or print. These efforts are coordinated through our partners at DMHAS Problem Gambling Services (PGS) and Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).

#### **Building Capacity**

Team members work toward achieving a Certificate of Competency in Problem Gambling by participating in 25 hours of continuing education.



**The Strategic Prevention Framework which is used to address the prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drug misuse, also applies to problem gambling .** CT Gambling Awareness Teams recently attended a 16-hour training with the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), a non-profit organization whose focus is building strong coalitions and creating community level change. We are currently using local data to identify our region-specific problems, root causes and local conditions around problem and underage gambling. This will enable teams to develop strategies which address specific challenges.

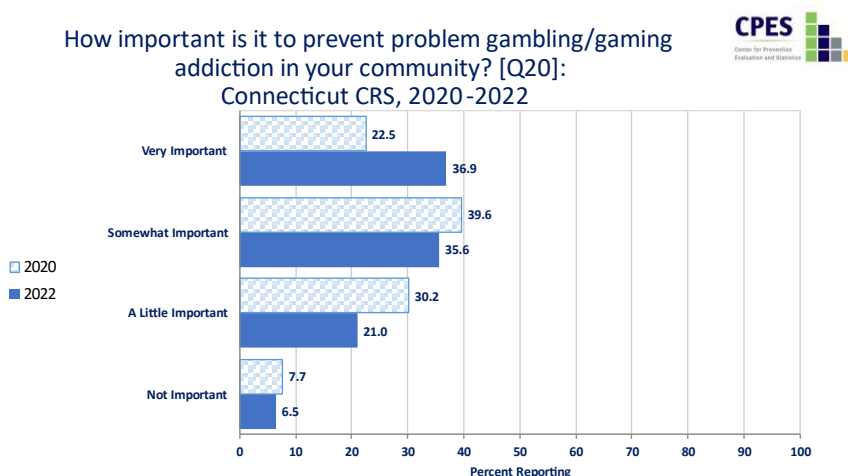
### The Local Prevention Council structure in CT

DMHAS funds over 150 community-based Local Prevention Councils (LPCs) in CT. These volunteer community coalitions work at the grassroots level. LPCs build capacity to address substance misuse, suicide, problem gambling, and promoting mental health and wellness for all ages and across many sectors. Collaborating with the LPCs is an important part of the PGAT's work across the state. **These groups know best about identifying risk factors like accessibility, favorable attitudes towards gambling, lack of financial literacy and poor coping skills.** They are also poised to address issues at the community level through collaborations with schools, social services, senior centers, faith-based organizations, and libraries.

### Readiness to Address Problem Gambling

The Community Readiness Survey (CRS) is conducted every 2 years to assess perceived behavioral health issues of greatest concern and measure readiness to address these issues. This web-based survey is completed by key stakeholders in all 5 regions through a collaboration between DMHAS, Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics (CPES), the CT Clearinghouse and the RBHAOs. This graph summarizes responses to "How important is it to prevent problem gambling/gaming addiction in your community?" **One might speculate that expansion of gambling opportunities in CT has heightened concern about problem gambling.**

How important is it to prevent problem gambling/gaming addiction in your community? [Q20]:  
Connecticut CRS, 2020-2022



**With increased media attention, data coming from CCPG about increased calls to the helpline, and greater accessibility through online gambling opportunities, the time is right to educate the public on responsible gambling and how to access treatment and support.** If you or anyone you know is struggling with gambling, help is available at 1-888-789-7777.

Sources: CT Council on Problem Gambling, National Council on Problem Gambling, CPES, DMHAS PGS, CADCA

Helpful links:

Gambling Awareness CT <https://gamblingawarenessct.org/>

RBHAOs <https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Commissions-Councils-Boards/Index/Regional-Behavioral-Health-Action-Organizations-RBHAOs>

DMHAS Problem Gambling Services <https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Programs-and-Services/Problem-Gambling/PGS---Home-Page>

CCPG <https://ccpg.org/>

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

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