



DECEMBER CLE BY THE HOUR

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GAMBLING ADDICTION: WHAT ATTORNEYS NEED TO KNOW

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Problem Gambling Resource Services

1-877-770-STOP

I. **Problem Gambling Resource Services (PGRS)** is a program led by the Louisiana Department of Justice, Gaming Division, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Behavioral Health. The program was created to bring awareness to the legal community about problem gambling and the **FREE gambling treatment services** available to all Louisiana residents.

A. 95% of people are able to gamble responsibly. What does Responsible Gambling look like?

- Gamble as a form of entertainment or recreation
- Usually gamble with friends or family
- Use discretionary income not money for regular expenses
- Gamble at appropriate places with a set amount of money
- Gamble at appropriate times and for a set amount of time
- Never borrow money to gamble or pay gambling debts
- Do not lose time from work for gambling
- Neither “chases” losses nor wins, but accept both as part of the gambling experience

*Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling

II. What is problem gambling?

All gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt, or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits.

- The loss of control manifested by the continuation of gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences.
- Problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide.

*National Council on Problem Gambling

III. What is Gambling Disorder? The DSM 5 defines it as:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money
- Is restless/irritable when attempting to cut down/stop
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop
- Preoccupied with gambling
- Often gambles when distressed

- After losing money, returns to “chase” losses
- Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling
- Jeopardizes or lost significant relationships, job, educational or career opportunities
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations

Mild-Moderate: 4-5 criteria met

Moderate: 6-7 criteria met

Severe: 8-9 criteria met

A. The 2016 Louisiana Gambling Prevalence Study reports:

- 5.4% of Louisianans, almost 180,000 people, may have a gambling problem
- 2.9% of Louisianans, over 96,000 people, may be pathological gamblers.

IV. Indicators of Problem Gambling:

1. Increase in gambling time and places
2. Increase in size of bets (sudden and dramatic)
3. Creating special occasions for gambling (canceling other plans)
4. Intensity of interest in gambling (constant high tension and excitement)
5. Boasting (about winning, evasive about losing)
6. Exaggerated display of money and other possessions
7. Gambling when there is a crisis
8. Drop-off in other activities and interests
9. Frequent absences from home and work
10. Withdrawal from family
11. Personality changes (increased irritability/hostility/Depression)
12. Diversion of family funds
13. Depression and/or Suicide Attempts

V. Why do Attorneys need to know about Problem Gambling?

Attorneys are in a unique position to identify problem gambling behavior in their clients.

- We have access to client information, financial records, and other documentation that is generally not available to others, including close family members.
- Clients, protected by attorney-client privilege, may feel safe disclosing a gambling problem to their attorney.

A. A gambling problem may present itself in a variety of legal issues:

- criminal (theft, forgery, fraud)
- bankruptcy

- family law
- tax law
- business issues, or
- employment law

As attorneys, our goal is to help our clients. Knowing the reasoning behind why our clients are seeking legal help can help us address their needs, including by recommending that they seek treatment, which is **free** for all Louisiana residents. We can also use treatment to assist our clients with sentencing in criminal matters.

VI. If you suspect a client may be at risk, ask these three questions:

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless irritable or anxious when trying to stop/cut down on gambling?
2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you gambled?
3. During the past 12 months did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?

A “**yes**” response to any single item indicates potential gambling-related problems and the need for additional evaluation.

The answer to those three questions can initiate a deeper discussion of the gambling behavior and guide you to seek a more comprehensive gambling assessment for your client.

VII. Attorneys are also at risk for Problem Gambling:

- Attorneys are among the professionals most likely to suffer from stress and depression, which can play a role.
- Attorneys are also risk takers, working in a sometimes high risk, high reward environment.
- Attorneys have access to large sums of money.
- Attorneys are at risk for alcohol and drug misuse, which can increase the occurrence of co-occurring disorders.

If you have concerns about your own gambling or if you suspect a client or colleague may have a problem?

Call or text the LA Gambler’s Helpline # 1-877-770-STOP: It’s Confidential & FREE

VIII. What happens when someone calls 1-877-770-STOP?

- The Helpline is answered by trained, certified and caring Helpline Specialist. The Specialists do not provide counseling, but they will refer you to a qualified counselor and all the **FREE** resources in your area.

- The Helpline, like all gambling treatment services offered in Louisiana, is confidential and **FREE**.
- Visit www.helpforgambling.org to chat or freegamblinghelpla.org for more information.

IX. What levels of free treatment are available?

- **Residential**
 - Center of Recovery (CORE)- 21 Bed Residential Facility located in Shreveport, La
 - Average Length of Stay-28 Day Treatment
- **Intensive Outpatient Treatment**
 - Provide weekly therapy for 6-8 weeks
 - Minimum of 3 days/ 9 hours per week
- **Outpatient Treatment**
 - Less than 3 days / 9 hours per week

“Although Pathological Gambling is one of the most expensive illnesses to society, it is one of the least expensive to treat and the most “curable.”

*2016 Louisiana Study of Problem Gambling

Please contact me if you have questions or need any assistance.
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