

Gambling Disorder Screening Day



Best Practices Guide

for Massachusetts Providers

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Gambling Disorder Screening Day (GDSD)

Thank you for participating in Gambling Disorder Screening Day! This one-day event is held annually on the second Tuesday of March during Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Screening Day was established by the Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance in 2014¹ with the goal of encouraging and supporting healthcare providers and others to screen for Gambling Disorder. You will be joining Screeners and Supporters not only from Massachusetts, but throughout New England, across the United States, and around the world, including many who have participated in Screening Day since its inception.² This Best Practices Guide will provide you with the tools and resources needed to host a successful Screening Day event!

Overview

Gambling Disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms, yet many cases go undetected and untreated. Screening identifies individuals who should seek further assessment for potential gambling-related problems. Although the Division on Addiction supports year-round screening for gambling-related problems, Screening Day is an annual opportunity to raise awareness of the need for routine screening, and to help identify gambling-related problems as early as possible.

Behavioral health organizations, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and other client-facing organizations and individuals can participate in this event. This could include screening clients during appointments, promoting self-screening for Gambling Disorder, or tabling in a community space. We refer to this as “hosting” a Screening Day event, and those who host an event are called “Screeners.” Because hosting a Screening Day event is not exclusive to healthcare providers, it is important to note that when we reference “clients” throughout this guidebook, we are referring to any individuals that you/your organization supports.

The objectives of Gambling Disorder Screening Day are to...

Inform

- Screening Day is an opportunity to inform providers and others in the community about the importance of screening for this treatable but often unrecognized condition.

Educate

- Screening Day is designed to educate providers and people who gamble about the nature of gambling-related problems and Gambling Disorder.
- Screening Day also provides an opportunity to educate providers and other Screeners about how to screen for Gambling Disorder.

Identify

- One major goal of Screening Day is to increase screening for Gambling Disorder. This is important because many cases of Gambling Disorder go undetected and untreated.
- For maximum impact, we encourage Screeners to promote their event and share information about Gambling Disorder within their networks and communities to help educate everyone on the importance of identifying and addressing Gambling Disorder.

Connect

- As a Screener, you will be positioned to connect clients with additional resources, including helplines, self-help tools, and fellowship. This connection can be beneficial even for clients who do not screen positive for Gambling Disorder.
- These resources can also be helpful for clients who are concerned with a loved one's gambling.

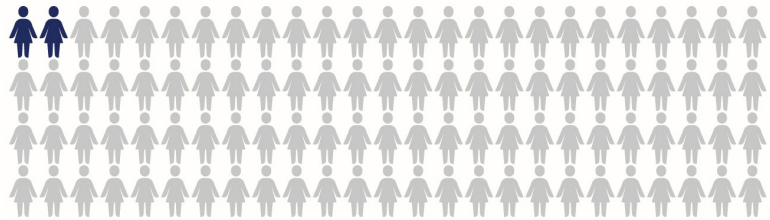
1. LaPlante D. A. (2014). Tuesday, March 11 is Gambling Disorder Screening Day: Are you going to do a brief screen? *The Brief Addiction Science Information Source*. basisonline.org/2014/03/march-11-is-gambling-disorder-screening-day-are-you-going-to-do-a-brief-screen

2. Gray, H. M. & LaPlante, D. A. (2023). Calling for worldwide adoption of Gambling Disorder Screening Day. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 31(6), 379-382, DOI: 10.1080/16066359.2023.2189246. [tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/16066359.2023.2189246](https://doi.org/10.1080/16066359.2023.2189246)

Why screen?

- Gambling Disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms.³
- Worldwide, past-year problem gambling prevalence rates range from 0.1-5.8%, with two to three times as many people experiencing less severe/sub-clinical problems.⁴

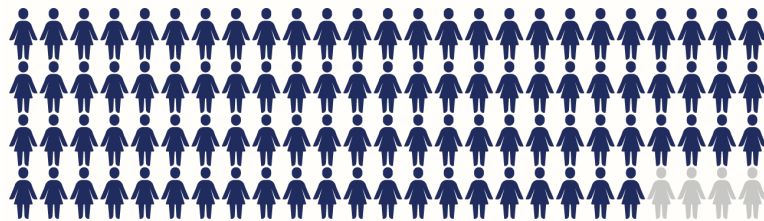
• According to one estimate from 2017, in Massachusetts, problem gambling affects 2.0% of the adult population.⁵ Put another way, between 83,000 and 135,000 adults in Massachusetts experience problems with gambling. Another 390,000-488,000 are at risk for such problems.⁵



Problem gambling prevalence in MA

- There are physical harms associated with gambling-related problems. People experiencing problems with gambling are more likely to smoke, excessively consume caffeine, require emergency medical care, and experience obesity.⁶
- Gambling often co-occurs with various mental health concerns, including substance use disorders, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and impulse control disorder.⁷

• Data from the U.S. National Comorbidity Survey-Replication (NCS-R) estimated that 96% of people who will experience a Gambling Disorder in their lifetime will also experience one or more psychiatric disorder(s) during their lifetime.⁸



Prevalence of another psychiatric condition among people with Gambling Disorder

- In the NCS-R, among adults who met lifetime criteria for Gambling Disorder, none reported seeking treatment specifically for this condition. However, nearly 50% received treatment for an emotional/substance use problem in their lifetimes.⁸ This means that behavioral healthcare is a crucial setting for detecting and addressing Gambling Disorder.
- Many cases of Gambling Disorder go undetected. This is partly due to limited assessment for this problem, along with stigma, denial, and lack of access to treatment.⁹
- There has been massive growth in commercial gambling in the past decade, especially with regard to sports betting and casino gaming, both in land-based venues and on mobile devices.¹⁰

3. Browne, M., Greer, N., Rawat, V., & Rockloff, M. (2017). A population-level metric for gambling-related harm. *International Gambling Studies*, 17(2), 163-175. doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1304973

4. Calado, F., & Griffiths, M. D. (2016). Problem gambling worldwide: An update and systematic review of empirical research (2000-2015). *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 5(4), 592-613. doi.org/10.1556/2006.5.2016.073

5. Volberg, R. A., Williams, R. J., Stanek, E. J., Houpt, K. A., Zorn, M., Rodriguez-Monguio, R. (2017). *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts: Results of a Baseline Population Survey*. Amherst, MA: School of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts Amherst. umass.edu/seigma/sites/default/files/Updated%20BGPS%20Report_Final.pdf

6. Black, D. W., Shaw, M., McCormick, B., & Allen, J. (2013). Pathological gambling: relationship to obesity, self-reported chronic medical conditions, poor lifestyle choices, and impaired quality of life. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 54(2), 97-104. doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2012.07.001

7. Yau, Y. H., & Potenza, M. N. (2015). Gambling disorder and other behavioral addictions: Recognition and treatment. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 23(2), 134-146. doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000051

8. Kessler, R. C., Hwang, I., LaBrie, R., Petukhova, M., Sampson, N. A., Winters, K. C., & Shaffer, H. J. (2008). DSM-IV pathological gambling in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Psychological Medicine*, 38(9), 1351-1360. doi.org/10.1017/S0033291708002900

9. Loy, J. K., Grüne, B., Braun, B., Samuelsson, E., & Kraus, L. (2018). Help-seeking behaviour of problem gamblers: A narrative review. *Sucht: Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Praxis*, 64(5-6), 259-272. doi.org/10.1024/0939-5911/a000560

10. Grubbs, J. B., Kraus, S. (2023) The relative risks of different forms of sports betting in a U.S. sample: A brief report. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 127, 152420. doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2023.152420

Gambling Disorder Screening Tool

Brief screens can help people decide whether to seek formal evaluation of their gambling behavior. The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS)¹¹ is a validated screen that includes 3 yes/no questions.

Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS)

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 of these questions indicates potential gambling-related problems. However, it is important to keep in mind that a positive screen does **not** signify a positive diagnosis for Gambling Disorder. Among a nationally representative sample, about one-third of people who screened positive on the BBGS went on to meet formal diagnostic criteria for Gambling Disorder.¹¹

We offer three versions of the BBGS:

1. A [printable version](#).
2. An [electronic version](#), translated into 22 languages.
3. We also offer free wallet-sized BBGS pocket screeners, which you can use and distribute. These pocket screeners are available in English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Brazilian Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole. Email info@divisiononaddiction.org for more information and to place an order.

The image shows two side-by-side panels of a BBGS pocket screener. The left panel is in Vietnamese, titled "Sàng Lọc Xã Hội và Sinh Học Ngắn Gọn về Đánh Bạc". It contains three questions with checkboxes for "Có" (Yes) and "Không" (No). The right panel is in Haitian Creole, titled "Ekran Rapid Biyososyal sou Je Aza". It also contains three questions with checkboxes for "Wi" (Yes) and "Non" (No). The questions are identical in meaning to those in the main BBGS tool.

Inside panel of a BBGS pocket screener in Vietnamese and Haitian Creole (left to right)

If a person screens positive on the BBGS or [any other validated screening instrument](#), provide or refer them for a comprehensive assessment for Gambling Disorder. A comprehensive assessment should only be conducted by a trained healthcare provider.

11. Gebauer, L., LaBrie, R., & Shaffer, H. J. (2010). Optimizing DSM-IV-TR classification accuracy: A brief biosocial screen for detecting current gambling disorders among gamblers in the general household population. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 55(2), 82–90. doi.org/10.1177/070674371005500204

How should I introduce the screen?

- Be welcoming and non-judgmental to minimize defensiveness and resistance. Many people feel guilty about disclosing their gambling history.
- Don't begin the conversation with "Do you gamble?" without first defining gambling and providing examples. You might overlook people in need of screening if you don't first establish a shared understanding of what gambling means. This is because many people have an overly narrow view of gambling, not realizing that activities such as playing poker with friends, playing bingo at church, or buying raffle tickets for charity are all forms of gambling. See ***What is Gambling Disorder? (Appendix A)*** for a definition of gambling.
- After ensuring a shared understanding of gambling, follow up by saying, "Keeping that in mind, do you gamble?" You may also want to ask questions with specific examples, such as, "How often do you buy lottery tickets? How often do you play cards for money?"
- From there, invite the individual to complete a validated Gambling Disorder screen, such as the BBGS.

Examples of gambling:

- Lottery
- Keno
- Racing
- Slots parlors
- Casinos
- Daily fantasy sports
- Scratch tickets
- Sports betting
- Raffles
- Betting on an office pool
- Betting on a card game with friends

What should I do if a client screens positive?

It is important to have a plan in place for how to handle positive screens. You should be prepared to discuss the results with the client and explain that a positive screen **is not** a diagnosis for Gambling Disorder but **does** indicate that they should consider engaging in a full assessment.

- If your organization has the clinical capacity to conduct a comprehensive assessment, you can conduct the assessment yourself or refer the client internally to someone else who can. Additional information about assessment can be found on the next page.
- If your organization does not have the capacity to conduct a comprehensive assessment after a positive screen, be sure to have a plan in place to refer the client to someone who can.
 - Connect the client to resources such as those listed in the handout, ***Where Can I Find Help for Gambling Disorder? (Appendix B)***. This resource lists local, state, or national resources, including the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline (800-327-5050). This Helpline is available 24/7 and will connect clients to the appropriate resources for further assessment.
 - If you refer the client to this Helpline, encourage them to share their screening with the Helpline agent.
 - Additionally, you can recommend the free gambling self-help workbook, [*Your First Step to Change*](#). (See the "Screening Day Planning Checklist" section for additional information.)

How do I assess for Gambling Disorder?

- Explain to your client that, based on their responses to the gambling screen, it is important for them to complete an assessment so that you can explore together if gambling might be an influential issue for them.
- We suggest that you assess your client for Gambling Disorder using the DSM-5 criteria. See ***What is Gambling Disorder? (Appendix A)*** for additional information. This assessment should be conducted by a trained healthcare provider.
- Understand that chasing losses, tolerance, gambling to escape problems, and relying on others for financial help are among the most stable symptoms of Gambling Disorder.^{12,13} Studies show that individuals presenting with these symptoms early in their treatment are more prone to prolonged cases. Be mindful of whether your client endorses these criteria when you are conducting an assessment.
- It is important to recognize that assessment is an ongoing process and you should revisit the client's diagnosis and treatment needs at subsequent sessions.
- Assure the client that you will discuss treatment options after the assessment and address any of their questions.
- Approach assessment with a cultural perspective, acknowledging the client's unique attitudes towards health and treatment. The [DSM Cultural Formulation Interview Guide](#) is a useful tool for clarifying cultural and other aspects of gambling from the client's perspective.

Who can host a Screening Day event?

Almost anyone can host a Screening Day event! Some examples include:

- Addiction service providers
- Mental health service providers
- Physicians (e.g., primary care and emergency medicine)
- Gerontologists
- Pediatricians
- Educators
- Community leaders/groups
- Employee Assistance Plan service providers
- Veterans' groups
- Corrections officials



12. Slezcka, P., & Romild, U. (2021). On the stability and the progression of gambling problems: Longitudinal relations between different problems related to gambling. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 116(1), 116–125. doi.org/10.1111/add.15093

13. Nelson, S. E., Gebauer, L., LaBrie, R. A., & Shaffer, H. J. (2009). Gambling problem symptom patterns and stability across individual and timeframe. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 23(3), 523–533. doi.org/10.1037/a0016053

How to Host a Screening Day Event: Overview

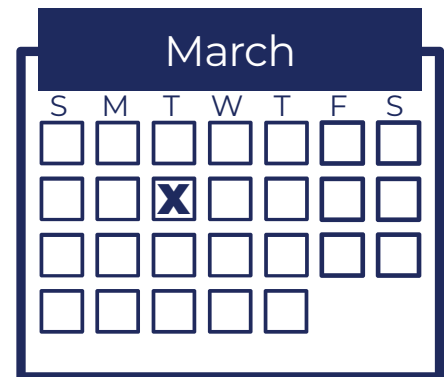
What type of event should I hold?

There are many ways to host a Screening Day event! Remember, the goal of Screening Day is to screen as many people as possible for Gambling Disorder. Be creative in your approach. Some options for hosting a Screening Day event include:

- Administering a gambling screen to clients during appointments
- Setting up a table in your organization's lobby or waiting room to provide information about Gambling Disorder and promote self-screening
- Hosting a tabling event in a community space, such as a library or faith-based institution

When should I conduct my event?

Screening Day occurs annually, on the second Tuesday of March. To join the global effort, consider planning for and organizing your event on this day. We encourage healthcare providers to integrate routine Gambling Disorder screening into their standard intake and assessment processes – every day is an opportunity to screen!



What resources will I need to conduct my event?

There are many resources and tools available to support you in planning and hosting a successful Screening Day event.

- Appendices to this Guide:
 - **What is Gambling Disorder? (Appendix A)** – A resource designed to help orient yourself, your colleagues, and the people you screen to the risks and consequences of Gambling Disorder.
 - **Where Can I Find Help for Gambling Disorder? (Appendix B)** – This resource list includes key hotlines, gambling referral resources, and self-help information for someone who may need further assistance. We recommend printing copies to distribute directly to clients.
 - **Treating Gambling Disorder: A Guide for Providers (Appendix C)** – A resource for providers interested in learning more about evidence-based treatment approaches for Gambling Disorder. If a client is diagnosed with Gambling Disorder following a comprehensive assessment, this guide can be used to support the development of a treatment plan.
- **The Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS)** – This brief gambling screen is available in a printable format, online as an e-screener, or as a wallet-sized pocket screener. Select whichever format will work best for your Screening Day event. (Refer back to the "Gambling Disorder Screening Tool" section for additional information.)

Screening Day Planning Checklist

This checklist provides a 4-week Screening Day event planning timeline. We encourage you to use this checklist to help guide your efforts.

Four weeks prior to Screening Day

- Review this Best Practices Guide!
- Review the full [Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit](#).
- Share this Best Practices Guide and the Gambling Disorder Screening Day Toolkit with staff members who will be facilitating the event.
- Decide what your Screening Day event will look like. You should be able to answer these questions:
 - What activities will you include?

 - Who from your organization will be involved?

 - Do the event facilitators need additional training or information to help prepare them to screen for Gambling Disorder?

 - What resources will your event require? For example, if you're conducting a tabling event, do you have a location reserved? What physical materials will you need at the table? How will you obtain those materials?

 - How and where will you promote your event? What resources will you need to promote your event?

□ Order any materials that you would like to use for your event:

- Free BBGS pocket screeners can be requested by emailing info@divisiononaddiction.org.
- Free gambling-related resources can be requested from the [Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse website](#). Materials can be mailed in hard copy or downloaded directly from the site. The Clearinghouse offers screening-specific, as well as general information, related to problem gambling. Examples include:

[Your First Step to Change](#)

This gambling-focused self-assessment and brief intervention workbook is available in English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese.

[Screening for Gambling Disorder: Getting Started](#)

This double-sided one pager can be used by any professional needing help screening for Gambling Disorder. It is available in English, Khmer, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese.

[It's Time to Talk About Problem Gambling](#)

This double-sided one-pager details the most common forms of gambling and what gambling can look like as an addiction. It is available in English, Khmer, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese.

[Do You Know Someone Who Struggles with Gambling? Poster](#)

This poster can be displayed in provider offices and/or waiting rooms to raise awareness.

[Let's Talk Risk: A Guide to Discussing Gambling with your Child](#)

This booklet contains stats, tips, and conversation starters for parents. Available in English and Spanish.

[MA Problem Gambling Helpline Sticker](#)

The sticker promotes the MA Problem Gambling Helpline with the toll-free number and website address.



Additional problem gambling-focused stickers, posters, buttons, toolkits, brochures, flyers, and informational one-pagers are also available!

- Begin promoting your Screening Day event.
- Bolster your knowledge of Gambling Disorder and screening. Get started by in free, [on-demand courses](#) and/or [live trainings](#) through the Massachusetts Technical Assistance Center for Problem Gambling Treatment (M-TAC).

Three weeks prior to Screening Day

- Familiarize yourself and your event facilitators with the signs and symptoms of Gambling Disorder:
 - Watch “[How Gambling Becomes an Addiction](#)” presented by Howard Shaffer, PhD, C.A.S.
 - Review **Appendix A of this Guide: *What is Gambling Disorder?***
- Familiarize yourself and your event facilitators with screening, assessment, and evidence-based treatment for Gambling Disorder:
 - Review the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Service’s “[Practice Guidelines for Treating Gambling-Related Problems.](#)”
 - Review **Appendix C of this Guide: *Treating Gambling Disorder: A Guide for Providers.***
- Continue to promote your Screening Day event.

Two weeks prior to Screening Day

- Familiarize yourself and the event facilitators with the BBGS questions.
- Develop a procedure and suggested responses to handle positive screens and communicate this plan with all event facilitators. If your organization is unable to provide an assessment, the following resources are available:
 - The Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline. Call 800-327-5050 or Text “GAMB” to 800327.
 - Review **Appendix B of this Guide: *Where Can I Find Help for Gambling Disorder?*** and print copies for clients. If there are other organizations in your area who can provide comprehensive assessments or other problem gambling services, compile a list of those organizations and share it with clients.
- Continue to promote your Screening Day event.



One week prior to Screening Day

- Confirm that you have all the resources and materials you will need to host a successful Screening Day event, including copies of **Appendices A and B of this Guide.**
- Continue to promote your Screening Day event.

Day-of-Event Essentials

Before participants arrive

- Event facilitators review the BBGS questions and the plan for how to proceed if someone screens positive for Gambling Disorder.
- Ensure all event facilitators have the necessary materials on hand.

During the event

- Create a welcoming environment where people feel comfortable sharing their experiences with gambling.
- Screeners should distribute informational resources on Gambling Disorder, including **Appendix A of this Guide: *What is Gambling Disorder?*** to clients interested in learning more about gambling and Gambling Disorder.
- Screeners should invite clients to complete a brief Gambling Disorder screen, such as the BBGS, even if clients are presenting with other substance use or mental health concerns.
- If a client screens positive, the Screener should discuss the results with the client and invite the client to complete a comprehensive assessment. If the Screener is unable to provide an assessment, they should refer the client to someone who can, and provide the client with referral resources such as **Appendix B of this Guide: *Where Can I Find Help for Gambling Disorder?***
- Keep track of the total number of people you invite to be screened, the total number screened, the number who screen positive, and any feedback you might have on this process and your event, to help you complete the (optional) Host Data Reporting Form. That form also requests gender and age information about clients who screen positive.

After the event

- Fill out and return the [Host Data Reporting Form](#) to support ongoing reporting and improvements to Screening Day.



Publicity and Promotion

How to promote Screening Day:

Promoting your Screening Day event can increase reach and participation. There are many ways to promote your event, including:

- Social media posts
- Blog posts
- Email blasts
- Announcements in newsletters or on websites
- Press releases
- Community calendars
- Signage and materials in waiting rooms or lobbies of healthcare offices or community centers

How you choose to promote your event depends on your preferences and available networks. Tailor your approach to your audience.

When promoting this event on social media, we recommend using any combination of the following hashtags:

- #GDSD
- #GamblingScreen
- #PGAM

Sample language to use when promoting Screening Day:

Below are a few social media promotion posts. These can be adapted for your specific outreach needs:

- Screening for gambling problems is easy with free, anonymous resources! Check out the 3-question e-BBGS if you want to know more about your gambling. divisiononaddiction.org/outreach-resources/bbgs-e-screener
- Gambling Disorder Screening Day is Tuesday, March [date]! The free Screening Day Toolkit includes resources, educational content, and promotional materials from the Division on Addiction! divisiononaddiction.org/outreach-resources/gdsd/toolkit
- Are you interested in learning more about your relationship with gambling? Stop by [location] on [date and time] for our Gambling Disorder Screening Day event!
- Gambling Disorder Screening Day is Tuesday, March [date]. Have you ever wondered if gambling has gone too far for you or someone you care about? Stop by [location] on [date and time]. We'll ask you three simple questions to help you learn more about your relationship with gambling.
- [Gambling Disorder Screening Day](#) is Tuesday, March [date]. Gambling Disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms, yet many cases go undetected and untreated. Failure to detect gambling harm is due, in part, to limited screening for this problem. Gambling Disorder Screening Day is an international grassroots event designed to increase awareness of gambling harm, and support and encourage providers to screen for Gambling Disorder in a variety of settings. Screening Day occurs every year on the second Tuesday of Problem Gambling Awareness Month (March).
- Participating in Gambling Disorder Screening Day has never been easier with the free Screening Day Toolkit, which includes promotional materials, educational content, treatment resources, and an electronic version of the 3-question Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen. To learn more about Gambling Disorder Screening Day and how to participate, visit the [Division on Addiction's website](#), email info@divisiononaddiction.org, visit the [Massachusetts Technical Assistance Center for Problem Gambling Treatment \(M-TAC\) website](#), or email mtac@hria.org.

Promotional Graphics:

We encourage you to use the Division on Addiction's official promotional graphics and logos for your Screening Day communications. You can access and download these materials via [Dropbox](#). (The promotional graphics are updated each year to reflect the correct date.)



**Appendix A:
What is Gambling Disorder?
(A resource for clients)**

What is Gambling Disorder?

Gambling is the act of risking something of value, like money or property, on an event that is determined by chance. Once placed, a bet cannot be taken back. While many associate gambling with slot machines and casinos, it encompasses a variety of activities like sports betting, playing bingo, buying lottery tickets, betting on office pools, and more. Gambling problems can exist for any and every form of gambling. Bingo players, lottery players, sports bettors, and friends playing poker can all develop Gambling Disorder.

Someone with an addiction will experience the **Three Cs of Addiction**, whether their addiction is to a substance or a behavior, such as gambling.

- They might experience negative **C**onsequences as a result of their addictive behavior, including an inability to fulfill work or home duties, legal problems, and social problems.
- They might experience a loss of **C**ontrol over their addiction, feeling like they are unable to avoid their addictive behavior.
- They might **C**ontinue their addictive behavior despite harmful consequences, even when things are at their worst.
- In addition to the Three C's, there is a fourth C distinct to gambling: **C**hasing losses. This occurs when, after losing money gambling, a person continues gambling in an attempt to get even.

Mental health professionals have developed more formal criteria that help to identify when someone has a problem. For example, many professionals use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria. The DSM is a handbook published by the American Psychiatric Association. Professionals use the DSM to diagnose psychological problems. The DSM-5 lists Gambling Disorder alongside other addictive behaviors.

The DSM-5 provides a series of symptoms commonly found among people with gambling problems. Like other health conditions, Gambling Disorder exists on a spectrum from mild to severe. To meet the DSM-5 criteria for Gambling Disorder, a person must be persistently impaired or distressed by their gambling, and must show **four (or more)** of the following symptoms in a 12-month period:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement (tolerance).
- Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
- Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
- Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
- Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
- After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses).
- Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
- Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

A clinician will need to rule out other possible explanations for these gambling symptoms, such as manic episodes.

Gambling Disorder is a treatable condition and help is available. If you think you might be experiencing a gambling problem, contact the **MA Problem Gambling Helpline (800-327-5050)** or a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.

**Appendix B:
Where Can I Find Help
for Gambling Disorder?
(A resource for clients)**

Where Can I Find Help for Gambling Disorder?

The Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline can direct you to local organizations who provide problem gambling treatment services. The following list includes information about this Helpline and other helpful resources. This list is non-exhaustive.

Getting Help

- **The Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline** provides referrals to licensed problem gambling treatment services for those seeking professional counseling, as well as referrals to recovery support services. To find outpatient counseling or support services, call 800-327-5050, text "GAMB" to 800327, or visit gambling.helplinema.org/pg-search for additional information or to live chat with a helpline specialist.
- **Gamblers Anonymous (GA)** is a community of self-help recovery support groups based on the same 12-step concept as Alcoholics Anonymous. To find a meeting near you, visit gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations. To speak with a GA representative in your area, visit gamblersanonymous.org/ga/hotlines to find your local hotline.
- **GamTalk** is an online support community for individuals experiencing problems with gambling. To chat online, visit gamtalk.org/chat.
- **Gam-Anon** is a community of self-help support groups for family members and loved ones of individuals experiencing problems with gambling. To find a meeting near you, visit gam-anon.org/meeting-directory.

Organizations

- **The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS)** is leading the public health response to problem gambling in the Commonwealth through a range of programs and services across the continuum of care. Find out more at mass.gov/orgs/office-of-problem-gambling-services.
- **The Massachusetts Technical Assistance Center for Problem Gambling Treatment (M-TAC)** provides free capacity building and technical assistance services for treatment and recovery programs and providers across the Commonwealth. Find out more at m-tac.org.
- **The Massachusetts Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling Prevention (MCOE PGP)** provides a range of capacity building services to support local communities in understanding, addressing, and implementing projects focused on problem gambling prevention. Find out more at mcoepgp.org.

Gambling Disorder is a treatable condition and help is available. If you think you might be experiencing a gambling problem, contact the **MA Problem Gambling Helpline (800-327-5050)** or a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.

Problem Gambling Helplines

(including helplines/hotlines for other needs that often co-occur with Gambling Disorder)

Massachusetts

- **Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline:** Call 800-327-5050 or text GAMB to 800327. Chat online at gamblinghelplinema.org.
- **Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline:** Call 800-327-5050.
- **Tobacco Cessation Quitline:** Call 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).
- **Massachusetts Domestic Violence Hotline (SafeLink):** Call 877-785-2020 or chat online at casamyrna.org/chat.
- **Samaritans Suicide Prevention Helpline:** Call or text 877-870-HOPE (877-870-4673).
- **Parental Stress Line:** Call 800-632-8188.
- **Child-At-Risk Hotline (to report child abuse or neglect):** Call 800-792-5200.

United States

- **SAMHSA's National Helpline:** Call 800-662-HELP (800-622-4357).
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** Call 800-799-SAFE (800-799-7233) or text START to 88788. Chat online at thehotline.org.
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988. Chat online at 988lifeline.org/chat.
- **National Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741
- **The Trevor Project:** Call 866-488-7386 or text START to 678-678. Chat online at thetrevorproject.org/get-help.
- **National Runaway Safeline:** Call 800-786-2929 or chat online at 1800runaway.org.
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender National Hotline:** Call 888-843-4564.

Gambling Disorder is a treatable condition and help is available. If you think you might be experiencing a gambling problem, contact the **MA Problem Gambling Helpline (800-327-5050)** or a health professional for more information and a complete evaluation.

Appendix C: Treating Gambling Disorder: A Guide for Providers

Treating Gambling Disorder: A Guide for Providers

There are a variety of evidence-based treatment approaches for clients experiencing Gambling Disorder. Available empirical evidence supports the use of cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational enhancement/interviewing, personalized feedback, and guided self-help interventions. Developing empirical evidence supports the use of some medications for the treatment of Gambling Disorder.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT is one of the most common and well-studied treatments for Gambling Disorder. This treatment seeks to change thoughts and behaviors that help maintain disordered gambling. CBT for the treatment of Gambling Disorder helps clients identify and correct cognitive distortions about gambling, develop problem solving skills and social skills, and avoid return to use.

- For information specific to providing CBT for gambling, please review Module 3 of M-TAC's **Ask an Expert: Learning about Problem Gambling from Researchers, Clinicians, Advocates, and People with Lived Experience** e-learning series: m-tac.org/modules/ask-an-expert-module-3/
- For evidence supporting the effectiveness of CBT for gambling: greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/systematic-review-and-meta-analysis-cognitive-behavioural-interventions-reduce-problem

Motivational Enhancement/Interviewing

These brief therapeutic strategies (e.g., motivational counseling and resistance reduction) help an individual to explore, acknowledge, and resolve their ambivalence toward changing their gambling behavior. Clinicians can provide these interventions on their own or as a supplement to other types of interventions.

- For information specific to providing motivational interviewing for gambling: mdproblemgambling.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MI-Final-Print-Book-20160122-V1-00-compressed.pdf
- For evidence supporting the effectiveness of motivational interviewing for gambling: greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/motivational-interviewing-meta-analysis-confirms-its-value-treatment-option

Personalized Feedback

These brief interventions require an individual to report on their gambling behaviors (e.g., amount of time or money spent gambling). The individual then receives feedback on whether their behaviors are similar to, or different from, how most people behave. Delivery of this feedback might be coupled with motivational enhancement/interviewing.

- For information specific to providing personalized feedback for gambling, please review Module 3 of M-TAC's **Ask an Expert: Learning about Problem Gambling from Researchers, Clinicians, Advocates, and People with Lived Experience** e-learning series: m-tac.org/modules/ask-an-expert-module-3/
- For evidence supporting the effectiveness of personalized feedback for gambling: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5322985/

Guided Self-Help Interventions

These include self-guided activities and information workbooks that help an individual reduce or stop their gambling. These strategies are sometimes used in conjunction with planned support (such as from a provider or a helpline specialist) in the form of a brief explanatory/informational phone call or motivational enhancement/interviewing.

- For information specific to providing guided self-help interventions for gambling: basisonline.org/2008/07/25/broadening-our/
- For evidence supporting the effectiveness of self-help interventions for gambling: greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/motivational-enhancement-and-self-help-treatments-for-problem-gambling

Medications

There are no FDA-approved medications specifically for the treatment of Gambling Disorder. However, a variety of medications are being tested and some show promise, such as nalmefene and naltrexone. Medications for the treatment of conditions that occur alongside Gambling Disorder may help relieve Gambling Disorder symptoms.

- For information specific to prescribing medication for gambling, please review Module 3 of M-TAC's **Ask an Expert: Learning about Problem Gambling from Researchers, Clinicians, Advocates, and People with Lived Experience** e-learning series: m-tac.org/modules/ask-an-expert-module-3/
- For evidence supporting the effectiveness of medications for gambling: greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/a-review-of-medications-for-gambling-disorder

Additional Resources

- Visit the **Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services** for more on evidence-based treatment approaches for gambling problems: mass.gov/resource/practice-guidelines-for-treating-gambling-related-problems
- Visit the **Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse** to order free copies of the *Your First Step to Change* gambling self-help workbook: massclearinghouse.ehs.state.ma.us/PROG-GAMB/PG6100kit.html
- Call 800-327-5050 or visit the **Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline** to start a conversation with a Helpline specialist and learn about problem gambling resources and service referrals available in Massachusetts: gamblinghelplinema.org/about-treatment
- The **Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist (MA PGS) Certificate** is the official problem gambling treatment certification of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Learn more here: m-tac.org/mapgs-certification

About Us



Division on Addiction, Cambridge Health Alliance, a Harvard Medical School teaching hospital

divisiononaddiction.org

The mission of the Division on Addiction is to alleviate addiction-related social, medical, and economic burdens through research, education, training, and outreach. The Division, centered on compassion and hope, combats addiction stigma through groundbreaking research and innovative teaching. Serving as a vital link between students, researchers, and the public, the Division educates diverse learners, including healthcare providers, scientists, and laypeople. The Division contributes significantly to public health through continuing education programs, faculty development, research collaborations, and fellowship.

Health Resources in Action



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hria.org

Health Resources in Action (HRIA) is a non-profit consulting organization serving government, non-profits, philanthropy, and communities across the U.S. HRIA partners with individuals, organizations, and communities to transform the practices, policies, and systems that improve health and advance equity. With our commitment to racial and health equity and community-centered approaches, HRIA has earned a national reputation as a public health leader.

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services



mass.gov/orgs/office-of-problem-gambling-services

The Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS) was established to lead the public health response to the expansion of gambling in the Commonwealth. Since 2016, OPGS has ensured a comprehensive and integrated public health approach to problem gambling by using data to inform initiatives, engage communities, and ensure cultural intelligence and humility. Critical to the work of MDPH and OPGS are data, the social determinants of health, with a vision of eradicating health disparities. The collective effort in leading a public health response centered on our values is unprecedented in the field of gambling.