



PROBLEM GAMBLING SCREENING TOOLKIT

Learn the basics of screening for
problem gambling and gambling disorder



WHY SCREEN FOR GAMBLING DISORDER?

- Gambling disorder is the only non-substance addiction listed in the Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders section of the DSM-5, due to the way gambling activates the body's reward system in the same way that substances do.
- Gambling disorder leads to financial, emotional, social, occupational, and physical harms.
- Screening and intervention work to effectively reduce harm from problem gambling.
- Individuals with substance use and mental health disorders are at higher risk for having a gambling problem.
- Not screening can lead to higher treatment costs in the long run.
- Gambling (even at moderate levels) may have an adverse impact on treatment outcomes.
- Gambling may become a sequential addiction for individuals recovering from a substance use disorder.
- Gambling can cause a risk in recurrence for those struggling with other use disorders.
- Many cases of Gambling Disorder go undetected due to limited assessment for this problem.

GOALS OF SCREENING



- Get the conversation started.
- Open the door to discuss gambling.
- Create awareness that changing behavior can lead to improvement.
- Begin to make connections between gambling and other major life areas.
- Make informed decisions about referring to resources such as support groups, self-help workbooks, specialized treatment, etc.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If screening or conversation indicates that there may be a gambling problem, find more resources at maineproblemgambling.org, including:

- Information on accessing Maine's Gambling Addiction Treatment Network.
- Downloadable workbooks available at no cost.
- On-demand learning modules available at no cost.



Find links to screening tools and resources at maineproblemgambling.org

BRIEF BIOSOCIAL GAMBLING SCREEN (BBGS)

The BBGS is a fast, evidence-based, 3-question gambling screening tool.

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

Note: Any affirmative answer is reason for further examination/assessment

PROBLEM GAMBLING SEVERITY INDEX (PGSI)

Thinking about the last 12 months, score the following questions using the scale below:

Never=0, Sometimes=1, Most of the time=2, Almost always=3

- Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?
- Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement?
- When you gambled, did you go back another day to try to win back the money you lost?
- Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?
- Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?
- Has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?
- Have people criticized your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true?
- Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?
- Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?

Total your score. The higher your score, the greater the risk that your gambling is a problem.

- Score of 0 = Non-problem gambling.
- Score of 1 or 2 = Low level of problems with few or no identified negative consequences.
- Score of 3 to 7 = Moderate level of problems leading to some negative consequences.
- Score of 8 or more = Problem gambling with negative consequences and a possible loss of control.



Find links to screening tools and resources at maineproblemgambling.org

DSM-5 CRITERIA

Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
- 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, handicapping or planning the next venture, 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..



WHY SCREENING OFTEN DOESN'T WORK (AT FIRST)

Often, gambling screening tools will not uncover a gambling problem because:

- The individual may not realize they are engaging in gambling.
- The individual doesn't realize that gambling is a potential problem.
- Stigma - The individual believes it is a character flaw instead of a disorder and fears that the provider and others will judge them.
- The individual believes gambling is a solution to their problems (emotional and/or financial).
- The individual realizes that gambling is causing a problem, but they aren't willing to consider giving it up.
- A person who is addressing other mental health or substance use disorder(s) may feel overwhelmed by dealing with just one problem and don't feel like they can deal with their gambling at this time.



Find links to downloadable workbooks & online support groups at maineproblemgambling.org

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AND SELF-SCREENING

Make resource materials available in your lobby, waiting room, etc. These can help raise awareness, and many contain screening questions that would help a person identify that their gambling has become a problem. In Maine, you can order free resources such as brochures, rack cards, and wallet cards, from the [Maine Prevention Store](https://www.maine-preventionstore.com/) at <https://www.maine-preventionstore.com/>

Keep a supply of "[Maybe It's Time for Help](#)" Wallet Cards (pictured here) on hand.



Front

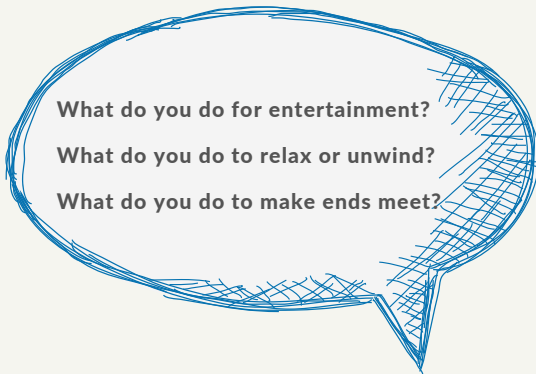


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BRING GAMBLING INTO THE CONVERSATION

There are ways to bring informal questions into the conversation that may reveal a gambling problem.

- When stress about paying bills is mentioned
- When there are popular sporting events coming up:
 - Tournaments
 - Big horse races
 - Championship games
- When the lottery prize gets very high
- When a topic related to gambling comes up
 - Fantasy leagues
 - Day trading
 - Bingo or Poker night



AdCare Educational Institute of Maine is a partner of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, an Office of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

Want to learn more? Go to maineproblemgambling.org for the link to a free, self-paced course about screening, and visit adcareme.org/problem-gambling for more about problem gambling services in Maine.