



FACT SHEET

Iowa Gambling Treatment Program

October 2018

Gambling and Gaming in Iowa

Iowans seeking to gamble can choose from 19 casinos licensed by the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission (IRGC): four tribal casinos; 2,400 lottery outlets; 2,817 licensed social and charitable gambling options, amusement concession and bingo games; and 5,452 registered amusement devices. In addition, Iowans have access to a broad range of social media and smartphone gambling-like games and applications, as well as an expanding number of internet-based and other (often illegal) gaming.

Problem Gambling Defined

For most people, gambling is recreational; however, for some people, gambling leads to serious problems. Problem gambling means participation in any form of gambling activity that creates one or more negative consequences to the gambler, their family or loved ones, employer, or community. The following table lists signs and symptoms that can help determine if an individual should seek help for gambling behaviors. Meeting four or more criteria indicates a gambling disorder; meeting one to three criteria could mean a gambling problem is developing.

Gambling Disorder – Diagnostic Criteria¹	
1.	Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
2.	Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
3.	Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling.
4.	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).
5.	Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
6.	After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing one’s losses”).
7.	Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8.	Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
9.	Relies on others to provide money to relieve financial situations caused by gambling.

Overview of Services

Services funded through the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Iowa Gambling Treatment Program (IGTP) are guided by a public health approach that considers the biological, behavioral, economic and cultural determinants that influence gambling and health. This approach incorporates a balance of outreach, education, prevention, treatment and recovery support efforts that work together to minimize the potential negative impacts of gambling on individuals, families and communities, and recognizes gambling’s availability, cultural and social acceptance, as well as monetary appeal.

Gambling Prevalence in Iowa

In SFY 2016, IDPH funded the [Gambling Attitudes and Behaviors: A 2015 Survey of Adult Iowans](#) by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social and Behavioral Research (UNI-CSBR). The survey was completed by a random sample of 1,825 adult Iowans, weighted to reflect the Iowa adult population. The survey provided the following information:

- **Gambling rates among adult Iowans:** 87.6 percent lifetime (ever), 68.1 percent during the past 12 months, and 39.1 percent during the past 30 days. It is estimated that almost 1.6 million adult Iowans gambled during the past 12 months.
- **Problem gambling prevalence among adult Iowans:** 12.6 percent of adult Iowans reported experiencing at least one symptom associated with problem gambling during the past 12 months. More than 1 in 5 (22.6 percent) Iowans reported that they know a person with financial, physical, or emotional problems caused by gambling.

¹ American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

Problem Gambling Treatment and Prevention

IDPH contracts with 11 local agencies to provide problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery support services in 11 service regions that together encompass all 99 Iowa counties. Funded problem gambling services include:

- **Counseling** for problem gamblers and those affected by the gambling of a family member. This includes e-therapy (phone, secure web-based portals and video-conferencing), which is available for eligible persons with barriers to accessing face-to-face treatment services.
- **Prevention Services** providing information and education on the risks and responsibilities of gambling and assistance for individuals at increased risk of problem gambling.
- **Helpline referral and education** through 1-800-BETS OFF helpline and website which have been integrated into the new Your Life Iowa helpline and website (yourlifeiowa.org/gambling), and offers online chat as well as a new text option.
- **Recovery Support Services** providing helpful supportive services like transportation assistance for persons receiving problem gambling counseling.
- **Training and professional development** for counselors providing treatment for problem gambling and common co-occurring conditions like substance use and mental health disorders.

State Fiscal Year	# of Prevention Hours	# of Clients Treated	# of Gambling Contacts to 1-800-BETS OFF	Traffic to 1800BETSOFF.org
2009	5,816	905	3,435	-
2010	9,077	948	3,942	-
2011	7,435	789	3,695	6,156
2012	6,602	728	4,029	13,599
2013	7,682	678	4,122	14,353
2014	7,710	602	5,417	11,208
2015	8,781	888	6,311	9,524
2016	9,282	697	5,792	9,689
2017	7,458	590	5,771	18,140
2018	8,108	759	4,993	17,805

Treatment Effectiveness

IDPH contracts with UNI-CSBR to monitor and analyze problem gambling treatment outcomes. The [Iowa Gambling Treatment Outcomes 2018](#) report found significant improvements for persons who received state-funded treatment. Highlights:

- Patients who received four or more services within 30 days from admission were associated with greater length of service and completion of treatment plans.
- Patients who participated in recovery support services and electronic therapy were associated with greater length of service and completed treatment plans.
- Patients who received four or more services were 75 percent less likely than those who received three or fewer services to meet criteria for Disordered Gambling six months after discharge.
- At discharge, patients reported significant improvement in several indicators compared to admission.
 - 24 percent reported “dissatisfied with life” compared to 66 percent at admission.
 - 25 percent reported being “late paying bills” compared to 50 percent at admission.

Treatment Services	\$922,000
Prevention Services	\$795,720
Recovery Support Services	\$38,131
Your Life Iowa Helpline/Website	\$183,000
Surveillance (BRFSS)/Outcome Monitoring	\$172,678
Health Promotion	\$125,000
Training/Professional Development	\$37,500
Data Reporting System	\$102,268
IDPH Administration Costs	\$315,817
TOTAL	\$2,692,114

For more information on the IDPH Office of Problem Gambling Treatment and Prevention, contact Eric Preuss at eric.preuss@idph.iowa.gov or (515) 281-8802.

ⁱ Problem gambling calls to Your Life Iowa, the 24/7 integrated hub for free and confidential help and information for alcohol, drugs, gambling and suicide, launched in July 2018.

ⁱⁱ Number of sessions to the Gambling landing page (1-800-BETS OFF) on YourLifelowa.org, which launched October 2017.