



March is National Problem Gambling Month

Gambling can be defined as the wagering of something of value on a random event with the intent of winning something else of value. Problem gambling, or gambling addiction, includes all gambling behavior patterns that have negative effects on an individual related to their gambling. Gambling can impact someone's family, their job, or even their health. Gambling disorder is a recognized mental health diagnosis. About 2 million U.S. adults (1%) are estimated to meet the criteria for severe gambling problems each year.

Some warning signs of a gambling problem are:

- Thinking about gambling all the time
- Feeling the need to bet more money more often
- Going back to try to win your money back ("chasing losses")
- Feeling restless or irritable when trying to stop or cut down
- Gambling despite negative consequences
- In extreme cases, problem gambling can cause bankruptcy, legal problems, losing your job or your family, and thinking about suicide

As of January 1st, 2023, sports betting is now legal in Ohio, this includes collegiate sports. Ohioans spent \$1.1 billion in sports bets in the first month it was legal. This type of gambling is offered online, at sports gaming facilities, and through terminals located in bars and restaurants. Though you have to be at least 21 to place a bet, there is a growing concern for our children, adolescents, and college age populations having a problem with gambling. 6.5% of 14–21-year-olds are at risk for problem gambling. Children introduced to gambling by the age of 12 are four times more likely to develop a gambling problem and many gaming apps are marketed to 2–17-year-olds.

Bayshore Counseling Services is a local outpatient agency that provides mental health, addiction, and prevention services. The Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board of Erie County has provided funding for screening and training on problem gambling. Currently, each person that participates in a diagnostic assessment is briefly screened for a gambling problem.

Bayshore Counseling Services also has two clinical counselors that are trained in the area of problem gambling. Melissa Fowler, MEd, LPCC-S practices out of the Sandusky office, 419-626-9156, and Chelsee Smith, MEd, LPCC-S practices out of the Port Clinton office, 419-734-5535.

