

Why Should Older Adults Learn About Problem Gambling?

When problem gambling does develop in an older adult, they have less time and opportunity to recover their losses. When older adults take the time to become educated about problem gambling they are more likely to recognize problem gambling in themselves and get help or to not enable friends or family who may have problem gambling.

Getting Help for Older Adult Gamblers

Certified gambling counselors see clients of all ages, from teens to older adults. Individual counseling, family therapy, and group counseling are options for the problem gambler and his/her loved ones at any age. Behavior modification techniques can also be used successfully, especially with late-onset problem gamblers. Moreover, support groups as Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon welcome persons regardless of age.

Keeping Gambling Recreational Among Older Adults

Adhering to the following 10 points can help enable seniors to gamble recreationally:

1. Set a money limit one can afford to spend/lose
2. Do not gamble on credit
3. Use only cash brought to gambling establishment
4. Avoid chasing lost money/treat wins as a bonus
5. Set a time limit and use a “buddy system”
6. Accept loss as part of the game and understand that past results do not predict future outcomes
7. Balance time, money and energy
8. Don't substitute gambling for other activities
9. Don't gamble to solve problems
10. Take a break (eat, see a show, take a walk, etc.)

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania maintains

**24-hour
Gambling
Helplines:
1-800-848-1880 or
1-800-GAMBLER**

This resource provides confidential information and support two people with gambling problems, or to those who are concerned about a friend or colleague or family member.

Remember, you are not alone. More seniors are gambling than ever before, many are experiencing gambling problems, and some find help.

If you recognize any of the warning signs discussed in this brochure, please do not hesitate.

Help is only a phone call away.

**In Pennsylvania:
1-800-848-1880 or 1-800-GAMBLER**

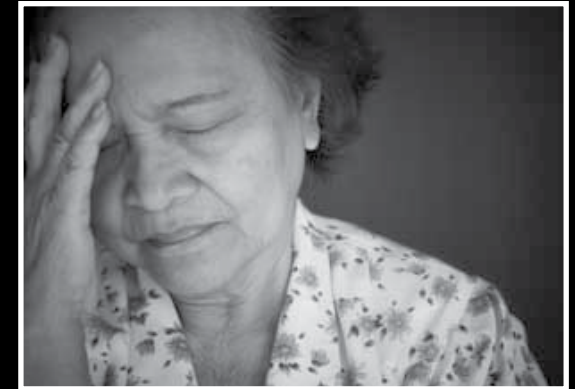
Office: 215-643-4542



**Council on
Compulsive Gambling
of Pennsylvania, Inc.**

12 East Butler Avenue, Suite 220 • Ambler, PA 19002
www.pacouncil.com

Older Adults Who GAMBLE



**The Council on
Compulsive Gambling
of Pennsylvania**



Older Adults

For many, gambling is a fun activity, but for those who become addicted to gambling, it can be a devastating disease.

It can be even worse for the older adult.

By 2020, there will be approximately 15 million Americans ages 65 and older living alone. As a result, many elders may turn to gambling, not only as a social and entertainment activity, but also as a means of trying to deal with loss, grief and time alone.

However, gambling is not a risk-free activity, particularly among this population. Older adults are often confused about their own behaviors, embarrassed that they cannot control their urges to gamble and reluctant to seek help because they think that “at their age they should know better.”

Gambling among older adults is on the rise, largely due to availability and accessibility. When gambling becomes a problem among seniors, it can be particularly challenging since it occurs at a time in a person’s life when recouping financial losses can be very difficult, if not impossible.

Even if they recognize that they have a problem, they may not know that help is available or where to get it.

Gambling Games Seniors Might Play

- Keno
- Horse Racing
- Bingo
- Lottery
- Sweepstakes
- Slots
- Cards
- Sports Betting
- Stock Market
- Internet Gambling

What Makes Older Adults Particularly Vulnerable?

There are several factors that contribute to why seniors are particularly vulnerable when confronting gambling related difficulties.

For many older adults, gambling is used as an escape, brought on by some of the following:

- An increase of unstructured time after retirement
- Loss of a spouse or other loved one
- A limited social network
- Physical and/or mental conditions or limitations
- Boredom
- Disposable income from retirement
- Compensation for a limited income

Additional Dangers of Older Adults’ Gambling

- Gambling away retirement savings and don’t have working years to make up for losses
- May not understand addiction, making it less likely to identify a gambling problem
- Often less willing to seek help than younger adults
- Hiding gambling due to the stigma associated with it
- Absence of screening for gambling pathology among elders by medical service providers
- Easy access to gambling and time with other people
- Possible cognitive impairments that may interfere with decision making abilities

Warning Signs of a Gambling Problem

- Preoccupation with gambling
- Withdrawing from family, friends or regular activities because of gambling
- Neglecting personal needs or health due to gambling
- Gambling beyond limits in order to experience the thrill or “action”
- Gambling alone or gambling more often
- Lying about gambling habits
- Experiencing unaccounted blocks of time due to gambling
- Communicating a sudden need for money or loans
- Gambling to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression
- Experiencing mood swings following wins/losses
- Missing possessions or assets
- Talks only about wins, not losses
- Using retirement funds or other savings to gamble
- Paying bills late
- Decline in physical health
- Attempting to stop gambling but unable to do so

[Sources: Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Maryland Council on Problem Gambling, National Council on Problem Gambling, SPICE - Topeka, Kansas]