

## PROBLEM GAMBLING The Silent Addiction

April 28, 2020- Did you know it is estimated that nearly 2 million adults in the United States have a severe gambling problem, and another 4 to 6 million have a mild or moderate problem? Problem gambling is often referred to as a “hidden illness” or “silent addiction” due to the lack of obvious physical signs or symptoms like other addictions. Anyone who gambles can develop a problem if they are unaware of the risks and don’t gamble responsibly.

District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) wants to bring to light that problem gambling is an emotional problem that has financial consequences. “The amount of money lost or won does not determine when gambling becomes problematic,” said Kortni Garcia, Public Health Educator for DHD#10. “Even if all the debts of a person affected by problem gambling were paid, they still have a problem; an uncontrollable obsession with gambling.”

Gambling becomes a serious problem when it begins to interfere with finances, relationships, and the workplace. The warning signs of problem gambling may include:

- Absent or late for work or school
- Undue interest in sports scores or sports news
- Excessive shopping or binge spending
- Unexplained money or new possessions
- Selling possessions
- Ignoring family, school, career, and community duties
- Unexplained mood swings
- Blaming others for problems
- Avoiding family and friends after borrowing money
- Refusal to talk about money matters
- Delaying payment of household bills
- Emptying bank accounts, retirement funds, and children’s savings
- Using credit cards for cash advances
- Getting small loans or a second mortgage
- Filing for bankruptcy
- Stealing to gamble

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Michigan Problem Gambling Hotline at 1-800-270-7117. You can also call or text the National Problem Gambling Helpline Network at 1-800-522-4700 or visit [www.ncpg.org/chat](http://www.ncpg.org/chat) or [www.dhd10.org/men-women/problem-gambling/](http://www.dhd10.org/men-women/problem-gambling/) for confidential help.



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