

EFFECTS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The adverse effects of problem gambling are far more reaching than just those they have on the gambler. Problem gambling also affects the gambler's family members, friends, employers, and the community as a whole. Some of these adverse effects include:

The Family

- ☑ Chaos and uncertainty
- ☑ Total family dysfunction
- ☑ Both parents absent (gambler is gambling - spouse working to support the family)
- ☑ Destroyed relations with family and friends
- ☑ Health problems (stress, depression, sleep disorders, physical health)
- ☑ Separation or divorce

The Workplace

- ☑ Misuse of company time (leaving early to gamble, gambling at work with co-workers)
- ☑ Poor productivity (poor decision making, not performing or lack of attention to job)
- ☑ Loans from employer and co-workers
- ☑ Personal problems brought to work (family, creditors calling, wages garnished)
- ☑ Company theft, fraud or embezzlement to get gambling money

The Gambler

- ☑ Lack of money for normal expenditures
- ☑ Loss of important relationships (family, friends, relatives)
- ☑ Loss of job or educational pursuits
- ☑ Bankruptcy
- ☑ Health problems (stress, depression, sleep disorders, physical health)
- ☑ Brushes with the law (fraud, theft, tax evasion, jail time)
- ☑ Attempted suicide or suicide

ABOUT THE PGRN

The Problem Gambling Resources Network (Alberta) is a not-for-profit organization that started in 1993 to respond to the tremendous increase in problem gambling issues that surfaced just after the expansion of the Alberta gaming industry in the early 1990's. Staff and volunteers at the PGRN are people who were directly or indirectly impacted by problem gambling and are committed to helping the problem gambler, their families and the community address problem gambling.

Mission

"The Problem Gambling Resources Network is committed to helping individuals and communities address gambling in a healthy and responsible way .

Programs

- Problem gambling workshops and presentations
- Peer support and treatment referrals
- Drop-in-centre

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 **PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCES NETWORK**

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**Gambling and
Problem Gambling
in Alberta**

 **PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCES NETWORK**

Gambling in Alberta has rapidly grown to become one of the most popular forms of entertainment and recreation in the province today. Each year over 80% of adult Albertans gamble, risking **billions** of dollars, in pursuit of the “big score.”

For the majority of Albertans, gambling is a harmless form of entertainment and fun; however, for some, gambling becomes a major problem that has devastating impacts on every facet of their life (i.e. financial, relationships, occupation, legal, health).

Problem gambling is the single most negative cost of this lucrative, money generating “windfall” we call “gaming” here in Alberta. In fact, some gambling experts suggest that the economic and social costs associated with problem gambling (i.e. bankruptcy, divorce, crime, social and health services) outweigh any of the benefits legalized gambling offers.

WHAT IS PROBLEM GAMBLING

Problem gambling is an addiction similar to alcohol, drugs, overeating or other addictive behaviors. It affects people regardless of gender, age, income, education, or ethnic background.

Problem gambling is defined as:

“Gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her social network, or for the community.”

PROBLEM GAMBLING IN ALBERTA

Since the introduction of electronic gaming devices (VLTs and slots) and the changes to casino gambling (i.e. extended hours, types of games) in the early 1990’s, incidences of problem gambling have exploded here in Alberta.

- 5.2% of adult Albertans (approximately 100,000 people) are problem gamblers
- 9.5% of adolescents in Alberta, between the ages of 12 and 17, gamble frequently and may be at risk of becoming problem gamblers
- As many as 14 other people are affected (directly or indirectly) by the individuals who are problem gamblers.

This explosion is evidenced by the increase of Gamblers Anonymous groups throughout Alberta (3 meetings in 1990 to over 60 today) and the introduction of government sponsored programs (i.e. AADAC) needed to respond to the ever increasing demand to help people with gambling problems.

WHO'S AT RISK

A gambling addiction, like any addiction, doesn’t care who you are, what you do, or where you come from. A person who excessively engages in addictive behaviours is just as likely as the next person to become an addict.

Although problem gambling favors no particular groups, there are certain types of people who may be more vulnerable than others to develop a problem with gambling.

These individuals tend to:

- ☑ play VLTs, slots, bingo or casino games
- ☑ gamble at least once a week and for long periods of time during each gambling session
- ☑ make less than \$20,000 per year
- ☑ gamble to escape personal problems
- ☑ have another family member with a gambling problem
- ☑ gamble while drunk or high
- ☑ have a history with other addictions (e.g. drugs or alcohol)

SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

- ☑ Feelings of guilt about gambling
- ☑ Lying about or hiding evidence to cover-up gambling
- ☑ Gambling to escape personal problems
- ☑ Betting more than intended or can afford to lose
- ☑ Increasing how often and the amount of time spent gambling
- ☑ Increasing wagers to get same level of excitement
- ☑ Chasing gambling loses
- ☑ Borrowing money or selling items to get money to gamble
- ☑ People criticizing gambling behaviour
- ☑ Personal or financial difficulties caused by gambling
- ☑ Relationships with family, friends and/or employer jeopardized because of gambling
- ☑ Feeling irritable or moody when not gambling
- ☑ Feeling stressed-out or unable to sleep because of gambling
- ☑ Putting gambling before other important life events (family, social or business functions)