

Problem Gambling Prevention Workgroup

Information Summary

Goal

In response to the increasing opportunities for gambling in Washington State, the State Problem Gambling Program is expanding prevention messaging and activities for problem gambling and working with partners to develop a Statewide Problem Gambling Prevention Plan.

Overview

Over the past decade, online and mobile gambling has surged globally. In Washington State, adults can legally gamble at commercial card rooms, Tribal casinos, through the state lottery, horse racing, charitable gambling, and other games of chance. Tribal casinos offer legal sports wagering that is on-premises only. To address this increase in gambling options and the need for additional services, 2023 legislation doubled funding for the State Problem Gambling Program and introduced year-round prevention efforts.

The 2021 Washington State Adult Problem Gambling Prevalence Study showed that 1.5% of all adults (3.5% of those who gamble) are at a moderate-to-severe risk for Gambling Disorder (an estimated 90,000 people). An additional 7.5% of all adults (17% of those who gamble) are at a somewhat increased risk for problem gambling (an estimated 400,000 people).

In the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey, 10% of 10th graders reported having gambled in the past year, an increase from the previous survey. Research shows that underage gambling creates an increased risk for problem gambling as an adult.

Action items

1. Create a new Statewide Problem Gambling Prevention Plan in collaboration with the Problem Gambling Prevention Workgroup and the Statewide Prevention Enhancement Consortium.
2. Develop a year-round prevention program.
3. Design a community-based grant program that focuses on integration of youth problem gambling prevention into existing prevention topics.
4. Develop a problem gambling toolkit for prevention professionals.
5. Promote problem gambling awareness and screening at colleges and universities.
6. Identify policy solutions that, if implemented, could reduce impacts of problem gambling.
7. Identify additional data sources to track youth and young adult prevalence rates of gambling.

Objectives/strategies

1. Contract with one or more media vendors to create targeted prevention messaging throughout the year, with a focus on youth and young adults.
2. Complete in-depth analysis of data on young adults from 2021 Prevalence Study to inform future planning and surveying.
3. Coordinate with Washington Lottery, Washington State Gambling Commission, and the Washington Horse Racing Commission on prevention and responsible gambling messages.
4. Add problem gambling to the list of educational requirements for substance use disorder professionals and licensed behavioral health clinicians.
5. Investigate options to find new data sources and add problem gambling/gaming/internet use questions to existing surveys.