



## Topic Disposition Summary: Gambling Interventions for Youth

**Date:** 7/24/2024

**Nomination Number:** 1078

**Purpose:** This document summarizes information addressing a nomination submitted on February 15, 2024, through the Effective Health Care Website ([link to topic nomination](#)). This information was used to inform the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) Program decisions about whether to produce an evidence report on the topic, and if so, what type of evidence report would be most suitable.

**Issue:** The National Council on Problem Gambling observes that as many as 2 million Americans meet the diagnostic criteria for severe problem gambling and 4-6 million have mild or moderate problem gambling. Given its prevalence among Americans, the nominator is interested in a summary of evidence on interventions for problem gambling in youth (under 21).

**Findings:** The EPC Program will not develop a new systematic review because we found systematic reviews addressing the concerns of this nomination.

**Background:** Gambling among youth aged 21 and under has become a growing concern in the United States. The increasing accessibility of online gambling platforms and the normalization of gambling in popular culture have led to more young people engaging in gambling activities. Studies have shown that the prevalence rates of problem gambling in youth range from 4% to 8%, while at-risk gambling can be as high as 15%.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, it is estimated that approximately 2.1% of youth meet the criteria for problem gambling, which equates to around 750,000 individuals.<sup>2</sup> Problem gambling has been associated with impaired social functioning, including strained relationships with family and friends.<sup>3</sup> Youth who gamble excessively may prioritize gambling over other social activities, leading to social isolation and a lack of support networks. This social isolation can further exacerbate gambling addiction and its associated problems.<sup>4</sup>

The economic consequences of youth gambling can be severe. Young people who engage in problem gambling may experience financial difficulties, such as debt, bankruptcy, and the inability to meet basic needs.<sup>5</sup> In the United States, the annual costs associated with problem gambling among youth are estimated to be around \$5 billion.<sup>6</sup> Youth gambling is strongly associated with various mental health issues. In the United States, approximately 68% of youth with gambling problems also meet the criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder, and young people with gambling problems are at a significantly higher risk of developing depression, anxiety disorders and substance abuse issues compared with their non-gambling peers. Half of youth with gambling problems also suffer from depression, while 20% have attempted suicide.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, around 35% of youth with gambling problems meet the criteria for anxiety disorders, and 60% have a substance use disorder. The stress and emotional distress caused by gambling-related problems can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions or contribute to the

development of new ones.<sup>8</sup> Early onset of gambling has been identified as a risk factor for developing gambling disorders later in life.<sup>9</sup>

Although youth gambling addiction is a serious public health issue, several recent systematic reviews have been published, covering various aspects of interventions, and there is insufficient new evidence to justify a new EPC evidence product.

### Related Resources:

We identified additional information in the course of our assessment that might be useful.

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- Montiel I, Ortega-Barón J, Basterra-González A, González-Cabrera J, Machimbarrena JM. Problematic online gambling among adolescents: A systematic review about prevalence and related measurement issues. *J Behav Addict*. 2021 Sep 16;10(3):566-586. doi: 10.1556/2006.2021.00055. PMID: 34550906; PMCID: PMC8997231.
- Eriksen JW, Fiskaali A, Zachariae R, Wellnitz KB, Oernboel E, Stenbro AW, Marcussen T, Petersen MW. Psychological intervention for gambling disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Behav Addict*. 2023 Jul 14;12(3):613-630. doi: 10.1556/2006.2023.00034. PMID: 37450372; PMCID: PMC10562823.
- OASAS. (2024). Guidance Document for the implementation of Problem Gambling Treatment Services. In *Guidance Document for the Implementation of Problem Gambling Treatment Services*. <https://oasas.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/guidance-document-for-implementation.pdf>

### References

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  2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). Substance use disorder treatment for people with Co-Occurring Disorders. In *TREATMENT IMPROVEMENT PROTOCOL* (Report TIP 42). <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep20-02-01-004.pdf>
  3. Ford M, Håkansson A. Problem gambling, associations with comorbid health conditions, substance use, and behavioural addictions: Opportunities for pathways to treatment. *PLoS One*. 2020 Jan 10;15(1):e0227644. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0227644. PMID: 31923269; PMCID: PMC6953879.

4. Hodgins DC, Stevens RMG. The impact of COVID-19 on gambling and gambling disorder: emerging data. *Curr Opin Psychiatry*. 2021 Jul 1;34(4):332-343. doi: 10.1097/YCO.0000000000000709. PMID: 33859126; PMCID: PMC8183251.
5. Latvala T, Lintonen T, Konu A. Public health effects of gambling - debate on a conceptual model. *BMC Public Health*. 2019 Aug 9;19(1):1077. doi: 10.1186/s12889-019-7391-z. PMID: 31399026; PMCID: PMC6688345.
6. Marotta, J., & Yamagata, G. (2022). 2021 Survey of Publicly funded problem gambling services in the United States. In National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services & Problem Gambling Solutions, Inc., *National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services* [Report]. [https://naadgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NAADGS\\_2021\\_Survey\\_of\\_Publicly\\_Funded\\_Problem\\_Gambling\\_Services\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_v2.pdf](https://naadgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NAADGS_2021_Survey_of_Publicly_Funded_Problem_Gambling_Services_in_the_United_States_v2.pdf)
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**Conflict of Interest:** None of the investigators have any affiliations or financial involvement that conflicts with the material presented in this report.

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