

# **Gambling and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among College Students in Florida July 2008**

A report to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.



International Center for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors  
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## OVERVIEW

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) contracted with the University of South Florida's Center for Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (CREAM) to conduct a survey of Florida college students regarding their gambling practices and associated behaviors. The research design, methodology, data collection, data entry and preliminary analyses were performed by CREAM in collaboration with the FCCG. Secondary analyses and the writing of the report were done by Drs. Rina Gupta and Jeffrey Derevensky, International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems, McGill University. The information gathered from this research is intended to be helpful in policy formation, in guiding future research, and in the development of preventive and treatment programs for college students.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first study that focuses specifically on the gambling behavior of Florida college students. In total, 2,020 students (648 male; 1362 female) (10 students failed to indicate their gender) were surveyed from seven major universities throughout the state. The following is a summary of the key findings based on the data obtained:

- 66.2% of the total sample (77.8% males; 60.6% females) report gambling on at least one activity in the past year.
- 46.5% of the college sample consisted of individuals who gamble and do not report any gambling-related problems.
- The most popular gambling activities engaged in within the previous year consist of playing the lottery (lottery, scratch cards, or draws) (39.9%), cards (27.3%), charitable games or raffles (18.9%), wagering on arcade, computer or video games (17.0%), casino games (land-based) (15.6%), wagering on professional sports (13.6%), electronic gambling machines outside a casino (13.1%), betting on non-professional sports events (9.4%), and sports pools (9.1%).
- Males were more likely to frequently (a few times a month to daily) gamble on card playing, sports, the Internet, games of skill and in casinos. Females predominantly chose to play the lottery on a frequent basis.
- Sports-related gambling emerged as a very popular form of gambling amongst male students. When considering the rates of participation for all three types of gambling [placing bets on professional (26.0%) and non-professional (18.1%) teams as well as participating in sports pools (17.9%)], the popularity of this pastime becomes evident.
- Both males and females predominantly indicated that they gamble for reasons of entertainment and to win money. Gambling for reasons of socialization were also cited by both genders, but more so by males (30.4% vs. 17.6%).

### Gambling Problems

- Using criteria from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – Fourth edition (DSM-IV, 1994) 5.2% of the Florida college students sampled are experiencing significant gambling and gambling-related problems. Overall, 2.7% were identified as problem gamblers (6.3% males; 1.2% females) and 2.5% are pathological gamblers (5.9% males; 1.0% females). Another 14.5% of students (21.0% males; 11.7% females) are exhibiting one or two gambling-related problems. While they do not meet the clinical criteria for a gambling problem there remains concern that these problems could escalate.
- According to data available from the Florida Board of Governors, there are currently 301,135 students enrolled in Florida's state universities. Based upon the current findings using the DSM-IV criteria, and the current findings adjusted for gender distribution, approximately 50,000 students statewide are experiencing some of the symptoms listed in the diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling, 10,975 students are likely problem gamblers, and 10,065 are pathological gamblers.

Taken together, approximately 21,000 college students in the State of Florida are likely experiencing significant gambling and gambling-related problems.

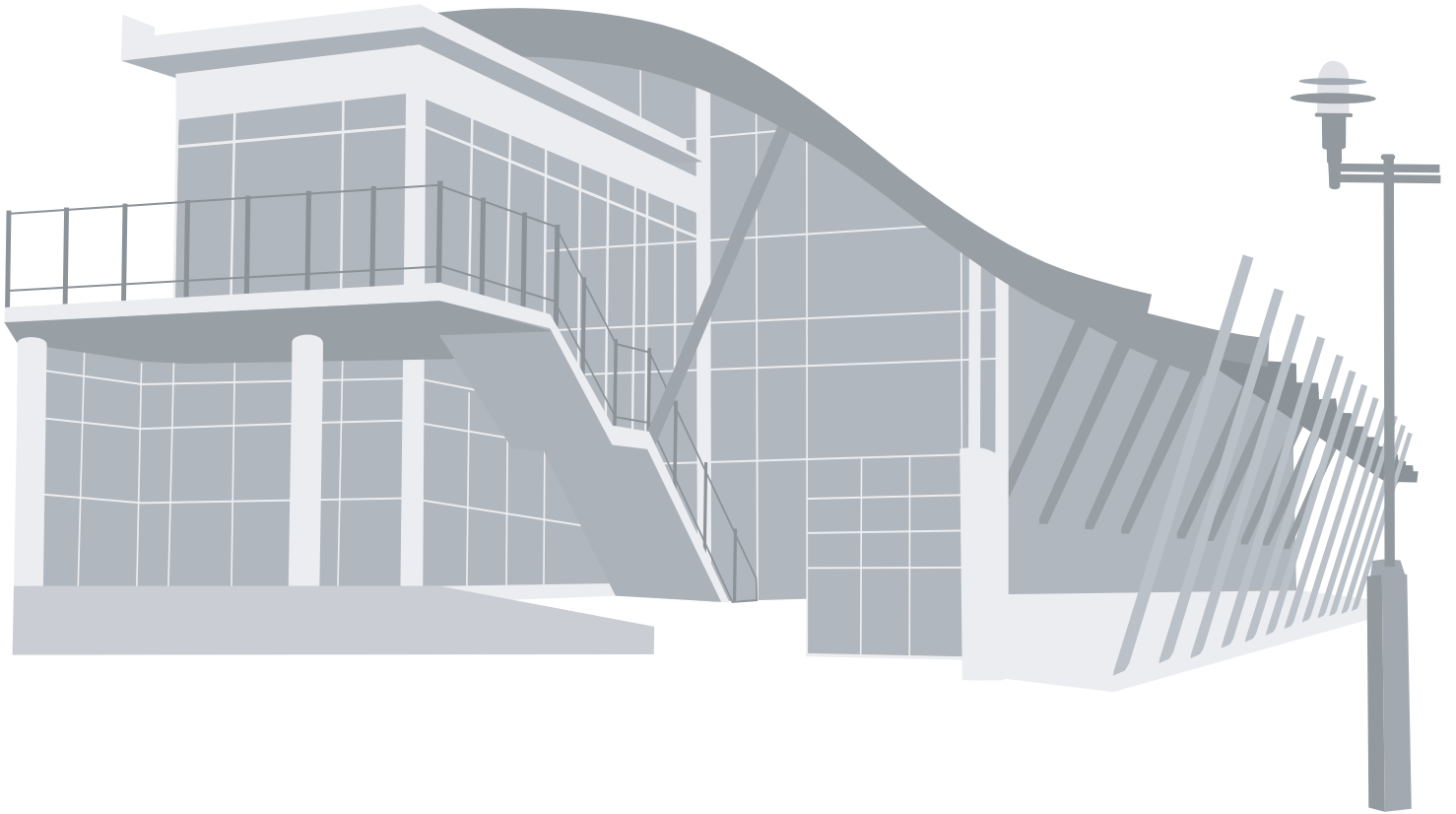
- It is somewhat concerning that 14.5% of Florida college students are at risk for gambling problems, as this rate tends to be significantly greater than previously reported for Florida adults (7.1%) (Shapira et al., 2002a) and adolescents (8.2%) (Shapira et al., 2002b).
- This survey found Florida college students to have twice the number of problem gamblers than previous adult research (2.7% vs. 1.4%), with similar rates to those found in adolescent populations (2.7% vs. 2.7%).
- The number of Florida college students classified as pathological gamblers (2.5%) was more than twice that reported for adolescents (1.0%) and four times that of adults (0.6%) in previous survey research.
- As was found with the rest of the sample, problem and pathological gamblers tended to reside either with their parents or in apartments. However, they are also more likely to live within sorority/fraternity houses than their non-problem gambling peers (10% vs. 1%).
- Pathological gamblers were more likely to have a GPA below 2.0 than those not meeting the criteria for pathological gambling.
- Students with gambling problems were more likely to own 5 or more credit cards, and were much more likely to be personally responsible for making payments on these cards.
- When asked about gambling debts beyond those owed on a credit card, 8.3% of pathological gamblers reported debts between \$500 and \$1000. Another 8.3% said they owed between \$1000 and \$5000. Of concern, 6.2% of those meeting the criteria for pathological gambling reported debts of over \$5000.
- Students with gambling debts reported a wide array of indebtedness to family, friends, financial institutions, employers, gambling establishments and loan sharks or bookies.
- At-risk and problem gamblers were most likely to turn to friends and family to cover their gambling expenses whereas those meeting the criteria for pathological gambling were most likely to rely on their credits cards.
- Students with gambling problems are more likely to report engaging in a wide variety of anti-social activities including shoplifting (4.5%), taking money or possessions without permission (5.5%), using other people's ATM cards without their approval (3.5), other forms of stealing (5.1%), and selling drugs (5.6%).
- As compared to the rest of the sample, problem and pathological gamblers were more likely to endorse gambling for reasons of needing to feel high, a sense of power, to impress family and friends, and to escape daily pressures or boredom.
- The more severe the gambling problem, the more likely individuals were to indicate having jeopardized relationships, educational pursuits, and employment as a result of their gambling behaviors.

- Those students experiencing gambling-related problems were more likely to report abusing illegal substances (i.e. cocaine) and prescription drugs, have more mental health disorders, and were more likely to report having relatives with gambling problems.
- Those with gambling problems indicated that they would be less likely to turn toward family members for help with a gambling problem, and more likely to *not* seek help altogether.

## Recommendations

- Universities should re-examine their policies concerning on-campus gambling and develop new policies if none exist. Programs to help minimize gambling problems, facilitate recovery for those experiencing a problem, and to raise awareness amongst the student population of the potential risks associated with excessive gambling should be allocated sufficient funding.
- School administrators should consider implementation of educational and training programs for staff and students (e.g., the Students Against Gambling Addiction [SAGA] program developed by the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling). Such programs should also consider targeting fraternity and sorority houses.
- Government and universities should develop and promote educational and awareness programs designed to inform students about problems associated with excessive gambling and Internet wagering.
- Universities should consider not sanctioning on-campus gambling activities including poker tournaments and casino nights.
- University personnel involved in the delivery of health services and counseling, should be trained in screening students for gambling problems and associated mental health disorders. A referral list of treatment providers should be compiled.
- University personnel involved in financial counseling should be trained in detecting and screening for excessive gambling.
- Student residence hall counselors should be trained to recognize problem gambling behavior among students in dormitories.
- Members of the Athletics Department involved in recruiting and coaching students should be provided with basic education on the popularity of sports wagering and the risks associated with gambling.
- Greater on-campus advertisements of the state gambling hotline telephone number and available services for gambling problems should be promoted. The use of posters on campus is strongly encouraged.
- There exists a clear and great need to educate peers and parents about the warning signs of problem gambling and the available resources for individuals in need of help.

- Dissemination of information about substance use and gambling problems should become part of the student orientation program.
- Given their familiarity with the Internet, a pilot project to help those in need through an on-line service might prove to be helpful.
- Students recruited on-campus for credit card applications should be given a brochure on the risks associated with excessive gambling.



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