

Reflections on Problem Gambling and Poverty/Homelessness

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Objectives

1. Understand the connection between problem gambling and poverty/homelessness.
2. Understand of the complex nature of the relationship between problem gambling, health, and poverty/homelessness.
3. Have a set of strategies for engaging problem gambling challenges among patients/clients experiencing poverty/homelessness.

Question

***What kind of work do
you do?***

Let us know in the chat!



THE NORMALIZATION OF GAMBLING



Connection between Problem Gambling and Poverty/Homelessness

- › Prevalence of PG = 15% to 58% in economically deprived individuals (data collected from shelter and related service agencies)¹
- › Prevalence of gambling problems among those experiencing poverty higher than in the general population¹
- › Bankruptcy and financial debt is high²
- › Stigma is highly apparent and negatively affects help-seeking and compounded by shame of homelessness and poverty³
- › The majority of those who gamble excessively report gambling problems preceding homelessness (82.4%)⁴

Men experiencing poverty and homelessness are **nine times** more likely to experience problem gambling than the general population.⁵

“You don’t realize it’s hurting you until you get to the point where you lose everything. You have nothing to live for anymore. It gets to the point where I’m in and out of shelters, in and out of shelters, in and out of shelters.”

A Conversation with Jason



Case Study: Female, Aged 44

- › A 44 year old female patient comes to see you. She says that she is depressed and lonely because she recently lost her husband. She also tells you that she can't make ends meet and is finding it difficult to pay her rent at the end of the month. She has recently started going to casinos so she has some social contact.



Question

If you saw a patient presenting with these characteristics, how could you help?



Consequences of Problem Gambling and Homelessness

- › Serious financial harm and debt
- › Emotional distress
- › Relationship disruptions
- › Reduced productivity at work/job loss
- › Physical and mental health problems
- › Homelessness



Pathways to Problem Gambling & Homelessness: Social Determinants of Health

- › Poverty
- › Disability
- › Education
- › Culture/racial identity
- › Mental illness
- › Childhood trauma
(abuse/neglect)
- › Substance use disorders
- › Lack of social support
- › Sex/gender
- › Neighborhood conditions
- › Community connectivity

“My health is deteriorating... I may have to go on insulin. The only thing gambling is going to do is make me sicker....it’s like a drug.”

Problem Gambling is Correlated with Complex Health and Social Issues



Failure of Social
Assistance:
Ontario
Disability
Support
Program

“I think financial hardship because when I was laid off I was on Employment Insurance which was fine but then, when I went to ODSP, all of a sudden it was almost like half of what I used to get from Employment Insurance. So, I think just kind of turning off the faucet so to speak financially the avenues you can take to change your life, you’re either going to get...you have to meet somebody who has...who’s wealthy, the place and time that they can put you up, or you’re just going to live day to day, just exist. You don’t live, you just exist.”

Gambling Addiction Case Worker

“Almost all of my clients who I’ve personally worked with have more than one issue. I mean, not only are they all in poverty and they all have gambling issues, but some of them have mental health issues, some of them have, a lot of them have family conflict, a lot of them are unemployed or have a disability of some kind so to just treat the gambling would be to not treat the whole person.”

Complex Challenges Demand Complex Solutions

- › Need for integrative screening and treatment in various healthcare settings⁶
- › Primary care clinicians should implement practice of screening and treating problem gambling
- › Improved awareness of problem gambling in settings working with mental health issues
- › Effective treatment that addresses the unique complications of multiple diagnoses
- › Example: Good Shepherd Ministry Gambling Addiction Program

Good Shepherd Ministry Gambling Addiction Program

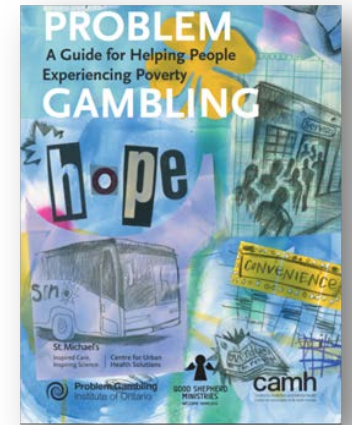
- › Targets people who have a gambling problem and who access shelters and other social services in Toronto
- › Two full-time Gambling Addiction Case Workers provide problem gambling recovery supports and services to individual clients
 - Counseling, skills training, goal setting, and crisis intervention
- › Facilitate two recovery groups
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based group
 - Life-Skills group
- › Integration of gambling into a multi-service delivery model

Strategies for Discussing Problem Gambling with Patients Experiencing Homelessness

How do you start a conversation about gambling with your clients?

Strategies for Discussing Problem Gambling with Patients Experiencing Homelessness

- › Make it routine to talk about gambling.
- › Be alert to the signs of problem gambling.
- › Make information on problem gambling available.
- › Integrate a problem gambling screener into practice.
- › Provide accurate information about how gambling works.
- › Help clients identify the consequences of their gambling.
- › Support clients in their attempts to cut down or quit gambling.
- › Describe problem gambling counselling and Gamblers Anonymous if someone is interested in getting support.

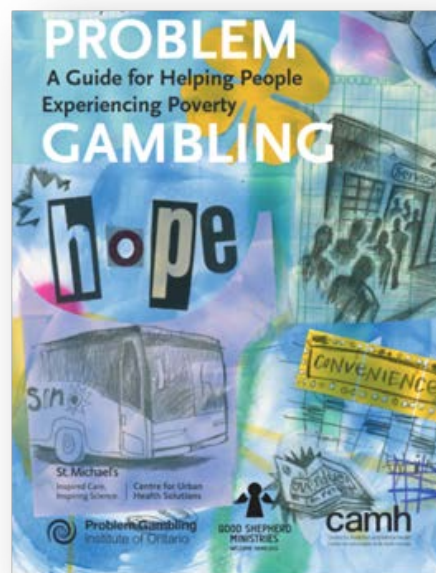


Resource

Link

<https://learn.problemgambling.ca/PDF%20library/handbook-poverty-homelessness-accessible-2017.pdf>

Problem Gambling: A Guide For Helping People Experiencing Poverty



With the [Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario](#) at the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) and [Good Shepherd Ministries](#), the research team co-developed a manual to guide social and health service providers working with people who have low incomes, housing concerns and concerns with gambling.

Landscape of Services for Problem Gambling

Few services in North America

Long waitlists

Services neglect harms associated with comorbidities⁷

Rarely integrated into other case management services

Requires housing and financial supports

Multiple competing needs: poverty, isolation, disability, chronic illness¹



Illustration: Joe Fleming

Self-Help and Self-Management

- › Barriers to treatment
 - Geographical distance
 - Long waitlists
 - Treatment costs
 - Individual barriers → denial or fear of stigmatization
 - Service hours
- › Technological solutions to support self-management of problem gambling
 - Spring! App

Steps Forward





Any questions?

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Citations

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