



Iowa Department of Public Health
Office of Problem Gambling Treatment and Prevention
January 2016

Gambling and Gaming in Iowa

Over the past 25 years, Iowa has seen a dramatic expansion of gambling and gaming opportunities. As of September 2015, Iowans can choose from 19 casinos licensed by the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, three tribal casinos, 2,400 lottery outlets, and over 2,800 social and charitable gaming licenses, as well as numerous internet and other illegal gaming opportunities. The cumulative effect of this expansion is easy access to gambling in every county of the state.

Problem gambling defined

For most people, gambling is recreational. However, for some people, gambling leads to serious problems. Problem gambling means participation in any form of gambling activity that creates one or more negative consequence to the gambler, their family or loved ones, employer, or community. The adjacent table lists the signs and symptoms that identify if an individual should seek help for their gambling behaviors.

Signs and Symptoms of Problem Gambling	
1.	Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
2.	Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
3.	Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back or stop gambling.
4.	Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
5.	Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
6.	After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even (“chasing one’s losses”).
7.	Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8.	Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
9.	Relies on others to provide money to relieve financial situations caused by gambling.

Overview of services

Services funded through the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Office of Problem Gambling Treatment and Prevention are guided by a public health approach that considers the biological, behavioral, economic and cultural determinants that influence gambling and health. This approach incorporates a balance of outreach, education, prevention, treatment, and recovery support efforts that work together to minimize gambling’s potential negative impacts on individuals, families and communities, while recognizing gambling’s availability, cultural acceptance and economic appeal.

IDPH contracts with eleven local agencies to provide problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery support services in eleven service regions that together encompass all 99 Iowa counties. Problem gambling treatment programs must be licensed by IDPH and are selected for contracting through a competitive request for proposals process.

Funded problem gambling services include:

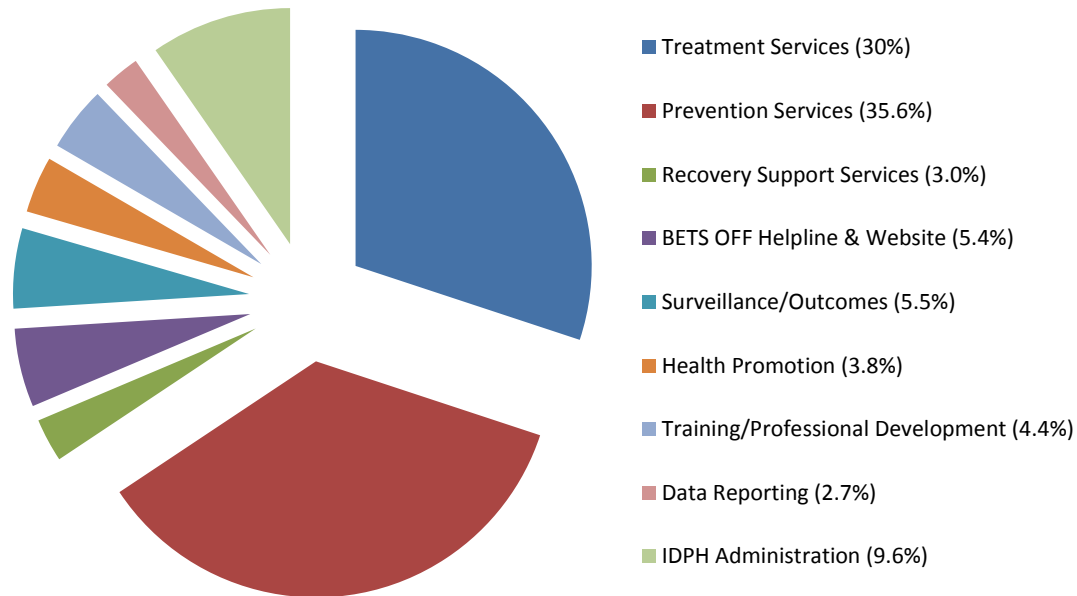
- **Counseling** for problem gamblers and those affected by the gambling of a family member and includes e-therapy (phone, secure web-based portals, and video-conferencing) which is available for eligible persons with barriers to accessing face-to-face treatment services.
- **Prevention Services** provide information and education on the risks and responsibilities of gambling and assistance for individuals at increased risk of problem gambling.
- **Helpline referral and education** through 1-800-BETS OFF and www.1800BETSOFF.org, including a live chat option initiated in 2014.
- **Recovery Support Services** provide helpful supportive services like transportation assistance for persons receiving problem gambling counseling.
- **Training and professional development** for counselors providing treatment for problem gambling and common co-occurring conditions, like substance use and mental health disorders.

Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment Services - Utilization				
State Fiscal Year	# of Prevention Hours	# of Clients Treated	# of Gambling Calls to 1-800-BETS OFF Helpline	Traffic to www.1800BETSOFF.org
2006	3,500	1,205	3,297	-
2007	5,963	1,146	3,613	-
2008	4,814	940	3,820	-
2009	5,816	905	3,435	-
2010	9,077	948	3,942	-
2011	7,435	789	3,695	6,156
2012	6,602	728	4,029	13,599
2013	7,682	678	4,122	14,353
2014	7,710	602	5,417	11,208
2015	8,781	888	6,311	9,524

Funding - IDPH receives an appropriation from the State General Fund for problem gambling services.

Problem Gambling Prevention and Treatment Services - Expenditures				
Activity	2016 (Budget)	2015 (Actual)	2014 (Actual)	2013 (Actual)
Treatment Services	935,677	771,557	853,542	794,831
Prevention Services	1,107,236	921,933	999,027	1,057,141
Recovery Support Services	92,540	57,025	51,234	50,999
1-800-BETS OFF Helpline/Website	167,418	114,100	88,967	80,195
Surveillance (BRFSS)/Outcome Monitoring	170,860	90,591	145,872	113,939
Health Promotion	120,438	122,372	136,776	227,222
Training/Professional Development	137,908	121,958	78,359	78,217
Data Reporting System	79,151	106,679	85,731	67,766
IDPH Administration Costs	300,086	268,408	372,813	269,778
TOTAL	3,111,614	2,574,622	2,812,321	2,740,089

SFY 2016 Iowa Problem Gambling Services Budget



Gambling Prevalence in Iowa

In SFY 2014, IDPH funded the [*Gambling Attitudes and Behaviors: A 2013 Survey of Adult Iowans*](#) by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social and Behavioral Research (UNI-CSBR). The purpose of the survey, a follow-up to a 2011 report, was to collect data from adult Iowans about:

- Types and frequency of gambling activities,
- Prevalence of problem gambling, and
- Awareness and opinions of publicly-funded gambling treatment services.

The survey was completed by a random sample of 1,826 adult Iowans, weighted to reflect the Iowa adult population. The survey provided the following information:

- Gambling rates among adult Iowans: The 2013 prevalence rates of gambling among adult Iowans were: 93.4% lifetime (ever), 77.8% during the past 12 months, and 46.4% during the past 30 days. The rate of gambling behavior in the past 12 months in 2013 was significantly higher than in 2011 (77.8% vs. 68.9%). It is estimated that almost 1.8 million adult Iowans gambled during the past 12 months.
- Problem gambling prevalence among adult Iowans: 16% of adult Iowans reported experiencing at least one symptom associated with problem gambling during the past 12 months. There is a consistent pattern for younger age groups and lower income individuals to have a higher prevalence of problem gambling.
- Reasons for gambling: The main reasons adult Iowans gave for gambling were for entertainment or fun (76.4%) followed by excitement or challenge (50.7%).
- Impact of problem gambling on others: The negative physical, emotional and financial consequences of problem gambling can affect family, friends, coworkers and others.
 - About 1 in 5 adult Iowans (17.7%) said they have been negatively affected by the gambling behavior of someone they know.
 - Nearly 1 in 3 Iowans (29.8%) reported that they know a person with financial, physical, or emotional problems caused by gambling.

For SFY 2016, IDPH has again contracted with UNI-CSBR to complete an update to the 2013 Gambling Attitudes and Behaviors survey of adult Iowans. The final report will be available in June 2016.

In SFY 2015, IDPH funded the [Iowa Youth Survey 2014: Problem Gambling Report](#) by the Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation (University of Iowa). The report, which is a follow-up to a 2012 report, addresses four questions on youth gambling behaviors, using 2014 Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) data gathered from more than 76,000 6th, 8th, and 11th graders:

- Who gambles among 6th, 8th, and 11th graders in Iowa? 25% of all students reported gambling at least once, and males were more than two times more likely to demonstrate lifetime gambling than females (37.2% vs. 14.6%).
- What are the significant types of gambling among youth? 14.1% reported playing cards with friends or family for money/possessions, followed by sports (12.4%), skill games (10%), and video games (8.1%).

Treatment Effectiveness

IDPH contracts with UNI-CSBR to monitor and analyze problem gambling treatment outcomes. The [Iowa Gambling Treatment Outcomes System: 2014](#) found significant improvements for persons who received state-funded treatment. Highlights:

- 65.9% of those seeking treatment were doing so for the first time and 22.8% were returning for their 2nd round of treatment.
- Clients who received four or more services within the first 30 days after admission were more likely to complete their treatment plan compared to those who did not.
- Clients who received e-therapy were more likely to complete their treatment plan than were those who did not.
- Clients who received one or more Recovery Support Services (RSS) were more likely to complete treatment compared to those who did not.
- The average number of days from first contact to Admission was 7.4 days. Interestingly, the number of days waiting for services was not associated with retention (length of service) or outcome (discharge status).
- 92% reported fewer signs and symptoms of problem gambling at discharge
- Among those who entered treatment having gambled during the past 30 days, the mean number of days gambled decreased from 8 days at admission to less than 1 day at discharge.

IDPH has again contracted with UNI-CSBR to collect and monitor data in preparation for the Iowa Gambling Treatment Outcomes 2016 report planned for SFY 2017.

Education and Prevention First

Problem gambling education and prevention services inform Iowans about the risks and responsibilities of gambling. This work takes place on many fronts. Examples include:

- A health promotion campaign to encourage Iowans to evaluate their gambling behavior and seek help if they have a problem
- Educating employers about the cost of problem gambling to their businesses
- Partnering with state-regulated casinos to train employees and educate and inform patrons
- Partnering with the Iowa Lottery to inform players that help is available for problem gambling
- School-based prevention efforts for high risk youth

The effectiveness of IDPH education and prevention efforts can be seen in the following:

- 74.3% of adult Iowans say they are extremely or moderately confident that they would recognize the signs that a friend or family member has a gambling problem.
- 89.4% are aware of the 1-800-BETS OFF Helpline.
- 98.2% admire the courage of people who seek help for a gambling problem.
- 84.2% say it would be very or fairly easy to talk with someone if they have a gambling problem.
- 77.1% say they would be able to talk to someone in their community if they had gambling problems.

IDPH efforts to increase service accessibility and efficiency

In SFY2015, it is estimated that approximately 9,000 adult Iowans met criteria for a gambling disorder. State-funded problem gambling services were provided to approximately 9.8% of those Iowans. While this is significantly greater than the national average (0.18%)¹, it suggests there is a significant gap between the number of people who need services and the actual number who receive those services. IDPH continues to work with providers to support an efficient network of care that reaches all Iowans in need. One example of those efforts is the continued enhancement and expansion of the use of e-therapy services (phone, video and web-based treatment options). While it's not feasible to offer treatment in every Iowa community, use of e-therapy helps Iowans with barriers to attending face-to-face treatment regularly, participate in treatment and receive the help they need.

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¹ Marotta, J., Bahan, M., Reynolds, A., Vander Linden, M., & Whyte, K. (2014). 2013 National Survey of Problem Gambling Services. Washington DC: National Council on Problem Gambling.