



July 2019

# Gambling Disorder Deserves Our Attention for Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

## Gambling Disorder: The Hidden Addiction

Since 2008, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (OMH) has encouraged nationwide participation in **Minority Mental Health Awareness Month**. OMH references data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to point out that minority groups are less likely to have access to treatment services, less likely to use community mental health services, and less likely to receive high quality care.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, treatment providers in many instances lack the training and understanding to be able to serve minority cultures and languages effectively.

Problem gambling is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) latest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as gambling disorder. The DSM-5 notes that gambling disorder "involves repeated problematic gambling behavior that causes significant problems or distress,"<sup>2</sup> and goes on to define diagnostic criteria for use by licensed mental health professionals.

Perhaps surprisingly, it was not until the release of the current edition of the DSM in 2013 that disordered gambling was formally recognized by the mental health treatment community in this way. Problem gambling is not a new issue, although it is often misunderstood. It's known as the hidden addiction, as those who suffer do not display visible signs, and unlike substance abusers, problem gamblers are difficult to detect by support networks and counselors.



## 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine: Gambler Demographics

According to last year's 888-ADMIT-IT Annual HelpLine Report, 28% of problem gamblers in Florida identified as Latino/Hispanic, which was the second largest population reflected overall. Blacks/African Americans accounted for 20% of all contacts, while 3% were Asian, 2% Middle Eastern, and 1% Mixed Race. Simply, 54% of all contacts receiving services from the 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine were from minorities.<sup>3</sup>

A pair of studies from 2011 found that Hispanic and African American respondents were more likely to exhibit problem or pathological (former APA classification, prior to DSM-5) gambling when compared to white respondents. Both studies also found that these two minority groups were more likely to exhibit co-occurring disorders, such as mood, anxiety, and substance use disorders.<sup>4,5</sup>

While problem gambling is an issue that affects people from all races, ethnicities, and cultures, these findings reveal a need for improved problem gambling prevention efforts and treatment strategies, along with additional research into ethnicity and race-related factors related to problem gambling.

## Improving Access, Breaking Down Barriers

Social stigma compounds things further. A lack of understanding about this devastating addiction, and feelings of shame, often preclude problem gamblers from seeking help.

What's more, the problem gambling community is in need of treatment professionals to assess clients for difficulties due to gambling. Clients presenting with a host of other mental health conditions may in fact be suffering from a gambling problem, which is often overlooked. For more information on disordered gambling or on becoming a Certified Gambling Addiction Counselor (CGAC) in Florida, call the FCCG's 24-Hour HelpLine.

The FCCG provides help, hope, and supportive resources to Floridians of all races and ethnicities through the 24-7, Confidential, Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine, 888-ADMIT-IT. So spread the word: if you or someone you know may be struggling with problem gambling, do not hesitate to give us a call. Even if you don't know someone personally, sharing the HelpLine will still benefit your community.

## GET CONNECTED

Florida's Problem Gambling HelpLine

888-ADMIT-IT

321-978-0555

gamblinghelp.org



# References:

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2. Wang, Philip. "What Is Gambling Disorder?" What Is Gambling Disorder?, American Psychiatric Association, Aug. 2018, [www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gambling-disorder/what-is-gambling-disorder](http://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gambling-disorder/what-is-gambling-disorder).
3. 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine Annual Report. The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, 2017-2018.
4. Barry, Declan, et al. "Gambling Problem Severity and Psychiatric Disorders among Hispanic and White Adults: Findings from a Nationally Representative Sample." PubMed.gov, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Mar. 2011, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20800852](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20800852).
5. Barry, Declan, et al. "Differences in the Associations between Gambling Problem Severity and Psychiatric Disorders among Black and White Adults: Findings from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions." PubMed.gov, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Jan. 2011, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21175923](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21175923).