

Latino Communities & Problem Gambling



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 01	Introduction to Problem Gambling	2
SECTION 02	Common Gambling Methods	4
SECTION 03	Problem Gambling and Cultural Traditions	8
SECTION 04	Latinos At-Risk	11
SECTION 05	Consequences of Problem Gambling in Latino Communities	13
SECTION 06	Help Options for Latinos	15
SECTION 07	Raising Awareness of Problem Gambling in Latino Communities	17

Section 01: Introduction to Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling: It affects millions of individuals throughout the world, yet resources for awareness, prevention and support are limited.

As we seek to raise awareness of problem gambling's warning signs, consequences and treatment options, we must take a deeper look at the gambling of specific communities. Gambling addiction affects people regardless of age, ethnicity, gender or background. Unfortunately, the help available, and the rate at which people seek it, often depends on these factors.

To understand how we can best raise awareness of problem gambling and help available in Latino communities, we must understand who gambles, how they gamble and why they might not reach out for help. We begin by defining problem gambling.

What is problem gambling?

Problem gambling affects individuals in the United States every year. People are at-risk for an addiction or are already addicted to gambling, whether they gamble by going to a casino, buying lottery tickets, placing bets on sports or gambling by one of the many other popular methods.

What can problem gambling look like?

- You can't stop gambling even when you have bills to pay, food to buy or debts to others.
- You don't stop gambling when you should be sleeping, working or socializing with family and friends.
- You escape feelings of frustration, anger and loneliness by gambling.
- Even when you realize you should stop, you can't. You return to gambling no matter what its consequences have become, and even if you've lost relationships with family members and friends or lost your home and possessions.

In 2013, the fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) was published. Mental health providers throughout the United States look to the DSM for the criteria necessary to diagnose patients and work with insurance providers.

The condition officially named pathological gambling was renamed gambling disorder. This condition is now classified in "Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders." This puts gambling disorder in the same category as drug and alcohol abuse, addictions more commonly understood.

Problem gambling doesn't just affect the individual – it affects their family members and friends, as well. It can place great stress on families who have always been close, and communities who depend on each other for support, friendship and entertainment.

Unfortunately, problem gambling isn't talked about enough. We must do our part to raise awareness within Latino communities, and help individuals find the support they need. The more we educate members of Latino communities about problem gambling, the more we can hope individuals in these communities will seek the treatment and support they need to recover.

Section 02: Common Gambling Methods

Not everyone's gambling addiction looks the same. Some people prefer to gamble with friends, while others prefer to gamble alone. Some gamble a lot of money infrequently, while others gamble small amounts daily.

There are a number of unique ways Latinos may choose to gamble, whether they are at home or out-and-about. Gambling opportunities can be found in neighborhood bars, restaurants, grocery stores and entertainment venues, as well as destinations such as casinos and resorts.

There are a few gambling methods popular in Latino communities that aren't frequently talked about in most problem gambling discussions.

CARD GAMES

Families and friends of all ages enjoy traditional card games popular in Latin America and Spain. Though the youngest players may not be placing bets, they are introduced to the thrill of taking chances with their plays and winning at a young age. Games such as el Mus, la Brisca, Escoba and Lotería, among others, are some of the card games that may be played in Latino homes.

DICE GAMES

Dice games such as Dudo can provide great entertainment for children and adults. Fast-paced and dependent on luck, these dice games replicate similar experiences found in gambling venues such as casinos.

UNDERGROUND COCK FIGHTS AND DOG FIGHTS

Though animal fights such as cock fights and dog fights are illegal throughout the United States, they remain popular among thousands of people. These events are done in the presence of adults and children, and bets are placed on the outcome of the fights. As of 2014, it is not only illegal to host this event but it is now a federal crime to attend a fight, as well.

UNREGULATED LOTTERIES

Numbers game is an illegal lottery played in poor neighborhoods throughout the United States. Though much less popular now than they used to be with older generations, among younger generations, numbers runners are still found delivering betting slips and cash to central locations where the games are organized.

These methods are often unregulated and illegal, making it harder for them to be shut down when issues arise. Regulation can help monitor problems and provide assistance if gambling gets out of control. A lack of oversight can contribute to problem gambling, as well as other consequences such as confrontations and money issues.

Beyond these methods more likely to affect Latino communities than other populations, the most common gambling methods affect Latinos as well.

CASINOS

Casinos had been slow in marketing to Latinos with the belief that they had less money to gamble, but that has changed. **Gambling venues are now courting members of Latino communities** with bilingual dealers, Spanish musical events, and more Spanish-language gambling collateral within these venues. With more casinos being built in New York State and throughout the United States over the next few years, raising awareness about problem gambling immediately is important.

SPORTS BETTING

Sports betting, especially during the Super Bowl and March Madness, crosses demographics regardless of cultural background. numbers runners are still found delivering betting slips and cash to central locations where the games are organized.

Gamblers in Nevada casinos wagered more than \$119 million ahead of the 2014 Super Bowl, with billions more wagered throughout the country.



As recently as 2012, reports suggested the NFL is gaining ground among English-speaking Latinos and is continuing those efforts. Each year, the NFL celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month to honor Latino contributions to professional football. Other efforts, such as NASCAR's Drive for Diversity development program and increased marketing of Latino MLB players show a desire for professional sports to be popular with a more diverse audience.

LOTTERY TICKETS

State-run lotteries provide individuals with opportunities to gamble frequently. Inexpensive tickets are available in grocery stores, restaurants, bars and bodegas throughout neighborhoods, providing individuals with easy access and unlimited opportunity to gamble.

ONLINE GAMBLING

Online gambling was legalized in Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware by the end of 2013, with more states expected to follow soon. Online gambling allows individuals to gamble for long periods of time within their homes, which can allow problem gambling to go unnoticed by family members and friends.

These are just a few of the most popular gambling methods. Whether a gambler enjoys bingo at the community center, poker at the casino, or purchasing lottery tickets at the corner bodega, gambling actions taken by a problem gambler can have serious consequences.

Section 03: Problem Gambling and Cultural Traditions

Why is gambling common in Latino communities? And why are some Latinos less likely to reach out for help? There are a few cultural factors that may help us answer these questions.

FAMILISMO Immediate and extended family ties are extremely important in Latino communities. Family members are influential in the development of young children and adolescents, and family time is strongly encouraged and valued. Latino families tend to rely on caring for their own, handling health concerns in houses that are often multigenerational.

Many Latino individuals gamble frequently when their family and community members are together. Gambling provides an easy way to socialize, and thus, frequent gambling among family members is culturally accepted.

PERSONALISMO Often, doctors can be more focused on the test results or medical facts than the person in front of them. Poor bedside manner can make the patient uncomfortable and less willing to open up to the doctor about his or her concerns. For many Latinos, these friendly and personal relationships must be made before serious health care discussions can begin. According to the Dimensions of Culture Organization, health care without “personalismo” causes a number of issues, including:

- Reduced preventive screenings
- Delayed immunizations
- Errors in medical histories
- Usage of harmful remedies
- Not following recommendations
- Decreased satisfaction with health care

Latinos traditionally value personal connections with others, and that must be present between any problem gambler and a person prepared to guide him or her to recovery. Gambling addiction is already a disorder people are afraid to talk about. People are ashamed and afraid they are to blame for what is really a diagnosable condition.

SIMPATIA Simpatía, valued in Latino culture, is the harmony and agreement sought in relationships. In most cases, Latinos tend to avoid confrontation with others. This desire for pleasant social relationships without conflict can make individuals avoid necessary conversations about addiction or problems within the household.

“Sometimes, in order to maintain simpatía, Latinos will concede to the desires of others in order to convey agreement and to maintain a harmonious relationship. Some Latinos will comply with others even if they disagree because they want others to think well of them.”
– (Rodríguez, 2008)

A woman may disapprove of her sister’s gambling, but she will not say so. A son may be worried about his father’s gambling, but he will not question it. By avoiding conflict, gambling addictions are allowed to go unaddressed and consequences may continue to accumulate.

MACHISMO & MARIANISMO Traditional gender roles have long defined how male and female Latinos interact, both at home and in the community. Men are supposed to be tough and are expected to be the heads of the household. They are not supposed to be emotional and they do not talk about their problems or flaws easily.

Women, however, are traditionally supposed to be submissive to men, especially their husbands at home. They are to cook, clean, take care of the children and support the husband. Not all Latino men and women today choose to live this way, but many still believe in the machismo and marianismo roles.

How does this affect problem gambling?

Men may not be quick to talk about their addictions, as they believe it may expose flaws that make them appear to be less of a leader and less masculine. As head of the household, however, they will look out for their family members and take action when they sense the problem of another, such as the addiction of a son or daughter.

Women, traditionally caretakers for their family members, can be slow to address their own problems when they must be responsible for taking care of others and their homes.

LANGUAGE Treatment and support for problem gamblers is limited in the United States, and many of the options currently available are only for English-speaking residents. Non-English speaking Latinos who rely on Spanish, Portuguese or other languages have fewer resources available to them and can often only attempt to struggle with English materials and speakers.

If a Latino individual lacks confidence in his or her English skills, he or she may not feel comfortable speaking to a counselor about problem gambling, and there is a risk that their descriptions of symptoms and consequences have not been properly translated.

Section 04: Common Gambling Methods

We've explored various types of gambling, such as card games, dice games and animal fights.

We've also looked at cultural traditions such as deep family ties and the importance of community.

WHAT IS THE COMMON THREAD?

Most Latino communities are social communities. Individuals within these communities enjoy spending time together, playing together and taking care of each other. Their methods of gambling are social, as they place bets against each other. Gambling is culturally accepted. It is normal to gamble – and thus, it can be harder for some to spot warning signs of a problem.

Unfortunately, this acceptance for gambling at home and within the community can allow gambling problems to develop and keep Latinos from reaching out of their family members about addictions when necessary. Fear of banishment from the family or shunning from the community can stop someone from opening up about their issues.

And that's only if they recognize there is a problem at all.

LOOK BACK AT A FEW OF THE TOP WARNING SIGNS. YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW MAY:

- Be haunted by debt collectors.
- Gamble to escape worry, boredom or trouble.
- Be unable to sleep without waking with thoughts of gambling.
- Gamble for longer than originally planned.
- Gamble to celebrate good news or avoid problems and frustration.
- Owe money to family members, friends and banks.
- Promise to stop gambling, but do not.

If it's culturally acceptable to gamble frequently in your community, are you likely to recognize warning signs of a gambling problem early? If not, you may be more at-risk for an addiction to go unnoticed and for consequences to escalate.

There are other reasons Latinos may be more at-risk for addiction. Recently immigrated Latino males may socialize with other men while seeking friends and employment. High-risk activities such as alcohol and gambling can be a common component of such group gatherings, especially when these Latino males are separated from their homes, spouses and families. Unstructured schedules are filled with block of time among other men facing similar situations who have limited recreational options. There is concern, though further research is needed, that there may be a link between immigration stresses and subsequent problems with substance abuse, depression and anxiety.

Section 05: Consequences of Problem Gambling in Latino Communities

What are the consequences of problem gambling?

LOSS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Problem gambling affects more than just the individual gambling. Relationships with family members and friends can suffer or end, as well. People around the problem gambler may stop trusting the individual due to dishonest behavior. Family members may feel ashamed of their relative and decide not to speak to or about them anymore.

As discussed before, the values of familismo, machismo and marianismo make these lost relationships a more severe consequence. As Latino families are often extremely close, a severed relationship with a problem gambler can significantly impact everyone in the household, as well as extended family members.

A gambling spouse can significantly alter the relationship between partners as well, upsetting the traditional roles of male and female. This is especially true if the male can no longer financially provide for the family, or the female is not taking care of the house as has traditionally been her responsibility.

LOSS OF CAREER AND REPUTATION

If an employer notices the problem gambler has become distracted at work and may not be doing what he or she is responsible for, the problem gambler can be fired. Depending on the position the problem gambler had, this can bring significant shame and embarrassment on the individual and the family. A job loss could quickly ruin the good reputation of an individual in a tight-knit Latino community, causing both emotional problems and a more difficult time securing a new job.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

The stress of an addiction can take a physical toll on the body of the problem gambler. Lack of sleep, poor eating habits and stress can cause physical changes to the gambler who spends more time gambling than taking care of themselves.

Depression is common among problem gamblers, and the National Council on Problem Gambling has estimated that about 80 percent of those with a gambling addiction consider suicide, *while one in five actually attempts it.*

There are numerous consequences that can occur due to problem gambling – it is important that people seek help as soon as possible in order to begin their recoveries.

Section 06: Help Options for Latinos

Many Latinos encounter numerous barriers when seeking help for gambling addictions. Spanish-only speakers have reduced access to treatment locations, leading to lower participation. Support options that are not culturally-sensitive and trained for the treatment of Latinos can suffer from low retention. Family members often insist they know what is best for the individual, when they are unprepared to help guide a problem gambler toward recovery. Finally, financial resources and insurance are often lacking when private care is necessary.

Here are a few options Latinos may consider when in need of treatment:

SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNSELORS Some treatment centers, organizations and counselors have Spanish speakers available to help problem gamblers. If a Spanish-speaker is not available at the organizations nearest the problem gambler, professionals there may be able to guide the problem gambler to other options.

SPANISH-LANGUAGE MATERIALS Resources on problem gambling are available at es.knowtheodds.org. Learn more about the warning signs and consequences of problem gambling as well as how to stay gambling-free during recovery.

SPANISH SUPPORT GROUPS Though less available than English-speaking support groups, formal and informal Spanish-speaking groups come together to discuss addiction and recovery. If gambling-focused support groups are not available, there may be support groups open to talking about a variety of issues, including depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling.

NYS HOPELINE Multi-lingual professionals are available to contact at the NYS HOPEline every day, at all hours. The NYS HOPEline offers support and motivation for alcoholism, drug abuse and problem gambling, and it can guide anyone in need to further support resources. The helpline can be reached any time by calling **1-877-8-HOPENY**.

While these are just some of the options available to Latino problem gamblers, it is important to remember that every individual's story is unique. There are different reasons people gamble, and problem gamblers experience a variety of consequences.

When speaking with problem gamblers in the Latino community, it's important to listen to each individual's personal account of how gambling affects him or her, and how an upbringing in a Latino community has affected whether or not he or she got help. Understanding exactly how addictions began can help us identify the underlying reasons for why problem gamblers struggle to quit today, and it can better prepare us to recommend treatment plans and counselors. To do so, we must answer questions such as:

- When do you feel the urge to gamble? Or, what are your gambling triggers?
- Do you gamble to celebrate?
- Do you gamble to escape problems, frustration or stress?
- How do you feel when you gamble?
- How do your family members and friends react to your gambling?
- Do you feel comfortable talking about your gambling problem with any family members or friends? If so, who?

Recovery is possible for all problem gamblers, regardless of where they came from or by whom they are surrounded. When we raise awareness about problem gambling, it makes it easier for more individuals to feel comfortable seeking the help they need.

Section 07: Raising Awareness of Problem Gambling in Latino Communities

We've identified a need to reach Latino communities. We must teach all communities about the risks and warning signs of problem gambling, and we have to help direct them to the problem gambling support and treatment they need.

Participate in cultural events.

Find an opportunity for you or your organization to join in cultural events in your region. These may be arts and entertainment displays, holiday celebrations or other occasions celebrating the Latino culture.

Participate in inclusive local events.

Check your city and county's calendars for local events that will bring together local residents of all ages and cultural backgrounds. You can raise awareness about problem gambling to a variety of individuals, with resources for each demographic.

Sponsor the production of Spanish-language awareness materials.

Reach members of the Latino community with Spanish-language materials that raise awareness of problem gambling, whether you buy advertising space in the community newspaper, produce radio and television PSAs for Spanish radio stations, or drop off brochures, flyers and posters around town.

Provide educational materials to community centers, churches and schools.

Create posters, brochures and booklets that can be distributed to local places where members of Latino communities will be able to access them. Provide them with information on the risks of problem gambling, its warning signs and what to do to find help. Finally, encourage people to help you raise awareness by taking your resources and distributing them elsewhere in the community.

Start conversations.

Problem gambling affects millions of people, but many do not understand it. Gambling is socially accepted in Latino communities – help people understand the differences between controlled and occasional gambling for fun and uncontrolled gambling that is threatening the lives and lifestyles of people. The more we get people talking about problem gambling, the more we can hope that people open up to us about their own concerns, problems and desires to recover.

The more people work together to raise awareness about problem gambling, the more we can help problem gamblers, regardless of language, nationality or background.

FIND HELP FOR GAMBLING

1-877-8-HOPENY

1-877-846-7369

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