



STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GAMBLING AND SPORTS WAGERING ISSUES IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

The national study commissioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association reveals a “disturbing” frequency of sports wagering among student-athletes. In particular, the NCAA 2003 National Study on Collegiate Sports Wagering and Associated Health Risks, which was released on May 12, 2004, finds “that male student-athletes are engaged in gambling or sports wagering at rates much higher than female student-athletes.” Specifically, the study shows “that almost 35 percent of male student-athletes have engaged in some type of sports wagering behavior in the past year, compared to only 10 percent of female student-athletes.”

The NCAA also reports “that Division III student-athletes are the most likely to engage in gambling or sports wagering, followed by Division II student-athletes, while Division I student-athletes were the least likely.” In addition, the study states that “1.1 percent of football players reported taking money for playing poorly in a game, and 2.3 percent of football players admitted they had been asked to affect the outcome of a game because of gambling debts.” Most troubling is that, according to the study, “1.4 percent of football players admitted having affected the outcome of a game because of gambling debts.”

Finally, the study reports that the sports with the highest percentages of male student-athletes involved in wagering on collegiate sports are men’s golf, wrestling, lacrosse, and football. Golf, lacrosse, basketball, and field hockey had the highest percentages among female student-athletes.

Gambling Prevention Program Overview

The NCAA study reinforces the important role of a comprehensive gambling prevention program on college campuses. According to the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling, a successful gambling prevention program relies on multiple strategies and practices, including strategies from each of the following categories:

- **Information and awareness strategies**, including pamphlets, posters, public service announcements, billboards, newsletters, etc.
- **Education and skill development strategies**, including professional development seminars for administrators, faculty, coaches, and staff, life skills training for student-athletes and students, etc.

- **Community development, capacity building, and institutional change strategies**, including the engagement of the university community in a targeted gambling reduction prevention plan, review of the institution's and athletics department's current gambling prevention policy, etc.
- **Public and social policy strategies**, including the development and implementation of a gambling policy at the institution, etc.
- **Intervention strategies for individuals at high risk**, including programs developed by and for at-risk populations (e.g., student-athletes), development of policies and procedures for referring first time offenders of institutional gambling policy, etc.

Gambling Action Teams and Strategies

In order to address the problems associated with gambling and sports wagering on colleges campuses and, specifically, within intercollegiate athletics programs, institutions should develop a "gambling action team." Gambling action teams or panels, which are currently in place on several college campuses, including the University of Alabama and Florida State University, are used to facilitate campus-wide awareness and produce strategies to address gambling- and sports wagering-related issues. A gambling action team would be tasked with preparing and implementing a gambling prevention program. Based on the successful efforts at the University of Alabama,

such a program should include, at a minimum, the following specific strategies:

- **Develop a comprehensive gambling education program for the student body, faculty, and staff.**
 - Develop an annual calendar of events for educational sessions.
 - Host an annual campus gambling symposium.
 - Provide educational resources and materials for the student body, faculty, and staff.
 - Maintain current gambling prevention resources on the institution's and athletics department's websites.
 - Secure speakers from the professional sports community, law enforcement, and gambling industry to host educational sessions on an annual basis.
- **Provide consultation services to the student body on problem gambling and debt management.**
 - Provide confidential consultative services and assistance for problem gamblers through the campus student health center.
 - Provide debt management education and assistance for students with gambling problems.
 - Identify local resources for students with gambling problems (e.g., Gamblers Anonymous chapters).
 - Provide gambling action team members and others with training and information on gambling problems from outside organizations.

- **Develop an approach to raise awareness regarding problem gambling, as well as gambling- and sports wagering-related issues, on campus.**
 - Incorporate gambling education and awareness into campus programs and events (e.g., freshman and graduate school orientation programs, residence halls meetings, fraternity/sorority activities and events, new faculty and staff orientation programs).
 - Distribute literature and advertisements outlining the warning signs of gambling, 24-hour contact number, and information on debt management around campus.
 - Provide public service announcements during athletics events.
 - Partner with campus newspapers and local publications to publish quarterly articles on gambling during particular periods of the year (e.g., college football bowl game season, Super Bowl, NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments).
 - Utilize current studies and surveys on student gambling behavior for education and awareness programs and materials.
 - Provide an annual assessment report to the senior campus administration.
- **Ensure compliance with local, state, and federal laws, as well as NCAA legislation.**
 - Develop a gambling policy for all campus groups (e.g., students, student-athletes, administrators, faculty, and staff).

Conclusion

To implement and maintain an effective gambling preventive program, an institution must obtain the support from all campus constituencies. The planning and implementation of a gambling prevention program will demand commitment, vision, time, and resources. As the NCAA study reveals, unfortunately, it is never too early to begin a comprehensive program.

Sources: National Collegiate Athletic Association, Executive Summary and Press Release, 2003 National Study on Collegiate Sports Wagering and Associated Health Risks (May 12, 2004); National Collegiate Athletic Association, Sports Wagering webpage, available at www.ncaa.org; Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling, "Prevention of Problem Gambling," (September 1998), available at www.ccp.org; Chris King, "Developing an Effective Gambling Prevention Program: Preventing a 'Full House' of Problems in Athletics Programs," Collegiate Proactive Solutions, Inc., Tele-seminar Reference Materials (March 16, 2004); University of Alabama, Athletics Department Compliance Website, available at www.rolltide.com/Compliance.

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