



NCPG Recommendations on Partnerships Between Higher Education Academic Institutions and Sports Betting Operators

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Partnerships between higher education academic institutions and sports wagering operators present concerns from a public health perspective. The NCPG Prevention Committee developed the following information and recommendations to address these wellness and gambling addiction concerns.

Background

- Legalized betting on college sports contributes to the normalization of betting on sports overall and to the belief particularly among young people that if a state sanctions and operates collegiate sports betting then it must be acceptable, normal, and safe.¹
- New forms of sports betting increase the availability, accessibility and acceptability of betting on the game. They are significantly different, and potentially riskier, than traditional forms of gambling that may already be available in states.
- College and university students tend to have higher rates of problem and pathological gambling compared to the general population.²
- A 2016 NCAA survey showed that 55% of men had reported gambling for money in the past year and, despite student athletes' high awareness of the NCAA bylaws forbidding student athlete gambling on sports where NCAA conducts a championship, one in four men and one in 20 women admitted wagering on sports for money in the previous year³. It is expected that these figures are

¹ Nyemcsok, C., Thomas, S. L., Bestman, A., Pitt, H., Daube, M., & Cassidy, R. (2018). Young people's recall and perceptions of gambling advertising and intentions to gamble on sport. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 7*(4), 1068-1078.

² Nowak, D. E. (2018). A meta-analytical synthesis and examination of pathological and problem gambling rates and associated moderators among college students, 1987–2016. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 34*(2), 465-498.

³ Paskus, T., & Derevensky, J. (2017). Trends in NCAA student-athlete gambling behaviors and attitudes. Indianapolis: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

largely under-reported, due to the risks that students face admitting they are gambling on sports. It is also worth noting that the latest NCAA survey, conducted every four years, was last conducted prior to the 2018 repeal of the Professional & Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA). Legal sports wagering has skyrocketed since the PASPA repeal.

- The same survey shows that among current student-athletes who have ever gambled for money, 88% of men and 69% of women had their first gambling experience before entering college.
- Most students are between 18-22 years of age and research clearly shows the brain's prefrontal cortex, which manages executive functioning, is one of the last areas to develop (approximately age 25).
- Technology is changing the way student athletes gamble; most who bet now are likely to do so online. An abundance of research shows that electronic forms of gambling increase the risk of problem gambling.⁴
- College student athletes have greater risk for gambling problems than the general college population, including: being highly competitive; being people of color (who have disproportionately higher rates for gambling problems); experiencing higher rates of anxiety and other mental health issues; experiencing higher rates of substance use.
- Individuals with gambling problems are at higher risk for depression and suicide, with as many 17% of individuals diagnosed with a gambling disorder reporting a suicide attempt.⁵

Recommendations:

Any sports wagering legislation should include proper consumer protections including the NCPG Responsible Gaming Principles for Sports Gaming Legislation in addition to the NCPG Internet Responsible Gambling Standards.

Following are key safeguards that should be implemented by parties engaged in college/university sports wagering:

Sports Betting Operators should:

⁴ Winters, K. & Derevensky, J. (2019). A Review of Sports Wagering: Prevalence, Characteristics of Sports Bettors, and Association with Problem Gambling. *Journal of Gambling Issues*.

⁵ Petry, N., and Kiluk, B. Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts in Treatment-Seeking Pathological Gamblers. *J Nerv Ment Dis.*, 2002 July; 190(7): 4620469.

- ***Not offer incentives, especially monetary incentives to colleges based on sign ups, registrations, gambling participation, revenue, handle or profits.***
- Provide dedicated funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction, including education, resources and programming. (We recommend a minimum of one percent of all revenue.) These funds should be dedicated to state problem gambling services (government programs and/or state NCPG Affiliates) and, where no state programs exist, direct funds to the National Council on Problem Gambling.
- Offer comprehensive employee training on responsible gambling.
- Offer self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent betting, requirements for help/prevention messages in external marketing.
- Partner with universities on athlete protection and education, using a third party affiliated with public / behavioral health entity(ies), to implement programming.
- Provide data to the University on betting activity and patterns to better inform prevention efforts.
- If offering athlete-specific wagers (e.g., wagering on a running back to gain X yards) take extensive steps to protect both gamblers and athletes due to the health, integrity and safety risks, as people with gambling problems are more likely to commit crimes, including match fixing.
- Implement a strict age gate verification, checking a player's identity, age and location through the use of public databases and other identity verification methods such as credit reporting agencies before a user is allowed to set up an account or access a sports wagering site.
- Set clear policies on who is and is not allowed to wager on sports.
- Provide RG and PG messaging included on advertisements/marketing including a helpline – state or national helpline plus at least one campus resource.
- Establish a ratio of promotional to responsible gaming messages in gambling advertising and marketing efforts.

- Comply with the American Gaming Association Sports Wagering Marketing Code.

Universities should:

- ***Not accept any incentives, especially monetary incentives, based on sign ups, registrations, gambling participation, revenue, handle or profits.***
- Require gambling partners to have in place a formal responsible gambling policy.
- Provide training and education to athletic departments and student athletes by public/behavioral health professionals certified in disordered gambling.
- Provide training and education to (academic advisors, counseling & testing centers, health centers, etc.) by public/behavioral health professionals certified in disordered gambling.
- Provide clear policies on gambling in student codes of conduct.
- Set clear standards for on-campus and University-affiliated properties and online content on sports betting advertising and promotion, including: not advertising in areas where the predominant population is expected to be under 21 (e.g., dormitories, dining halls); not using likeness of any specific student athlete; not advertising in conjunction with alcohol, cannabis, or other products that present risk to student health and safety.
- Provide disordered gambling screening questions on counseling intake questionnaires to determine if gambling is part or all of a student's problem.
- Provide disordered gambling treatment services on campus, or establish a formal treatment referral process for a student to get services off campus from a mental health professional certified in disordered gambling.
- Review and incorporate the International Center for Responsible Gaming Task Force for College Gambling Policies and Recommendations into their programs.

State Governments should:

- Conduct surveys of the prevalence of gambling participation and addiction at regular periods in order to monitor impacts of sports betting and have data that will support evidence-based mitigation efforts. In addition to adult populations,

research should include youth and adult samples, with particular focus on high school and college students.

- Develop comprehensive problem gambling prevention, education, treatment, enforcement, responsible gambling, research and recovery programs for all residents.
- Provide dedicated funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction, including education, resources and programming. (We recommend a minimum of one percent of all revenue.) These funds should be dedicated to state problem gambling services (government programs and/or state NCPG Affiliates) and, where no problem gambling programs exist, may direct funds to the National Council on Problem Gambling.
- Establish stringent responsible gambling regulations for sports betting operators and vendors.