



# OSAM-O-GRAM

DATE: November 6, 2002  
DATELINE: Ohio



Wright State University  
The University of Akron

## Substance Abuse and Compulsive Gambling (Part I): Findings of a Rapid Response Initiative

The OSAM Network conducted a rapid response investigation (January-June 2002) to provide the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) and the Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC) with information to help the departments develop future directions for the expansion of prevention and treatment services related to compulsive gambling and substance abuse. Part I of this OSAM-O-Gram presents general findings.

Active or recovering substance abusers who also reported any kind of gambling experience were interviewed for this investigation. In addition, substance abuse treatment providers were interviewed to better understand compulsive gambling among their substance abusing clients.

Substance abuse accompanied gambling activities of most of the participants interviewed. Based on interviews with active users, three themes emerged from the investigation:

- For some participants, gambling was an attempt to win money to purchase more drugs;
- Some participants believed drug use facilitated the winning process because of the calming or relaxing effects of some drugs; and
- Some participants reported that gambling provided a “high” like the high associated with drug use—the gambling high sometimes overwhelming the drug high.

Most gamblers interviewed reported problems with family, finances and health due to their gambling; however, not all active users interviewed believed that they had a gambling problem. While a few were familiar with Gamblers Anonymous, most participants did not know specifically where to go for assistance.

Most treatment providers reported that their agencies did not screen for gambling problems, nor did they have staff specifically trained to treat compulsive gambling.

The following recommendations were made:

- More public awareness regarding help with gambling problems;
- The Ohio Lottery Commission should make information about Gamblers Anonymous more readily accessible to those who play the lottery; and
- Substance abuse treatment agencies should consider screening clients for gambling problems.

\*Please visit the ODADAS web site to view this report in its entirety.

*OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the January 2002 OSAM Network meeting.*

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