

## Problem Gambling Prevention Inclusion of “**Gaming**” Guidance

Gambling and **gaming** often can be viewed as similar activities, and within the gambling industry the terms are often used interchangeably. Merriam Webster has two definitions for gaming: “a) the practice or activity of playing games for stakes – gambling; and b) the practice or activity of playing computer or video games.”<sup>1</sup> To blur the lines further many **gaming** activities now include gambling features and vice versa. Due to the intersection or “convergence” of these activities, Oregon Problem Gambling Services (PGS) is adopting the following definitions and providing guidance for Problem Gambling Prevention Programs regarding the inclusion of **gaming** in problem gambling prevention efforts.

### Definitions:

- Gambling is the wagering of money or something of material value on an event with uncertain outcome with the hope of winning something of greater value.
- **Gaming** is the practice or activity of playing electronic games on game consoles or online without wagering of money or something of material value, on an event with uncertain outcome with the hope of winning something of greater value.

### Inclusion of **Gaming** in Problem Gambling Prevention Efforts

Oregon PGS has determined that it is appropriate for state funded Problem Gambling Prevention Professionals to include **gaming** into problem gambling prevention efforts. Problem gaming has been documented in research and determined to be a risk factors that places an individual at higher risk of developing a problem with gambling. Please note that prevention efforts regarding **gaming** need to reflect the potential risk of developing a problem with gambling as part of the activity or strategy to ensure compliance with ORS 413.522, which states that all moneys in the Problem Gambling Treatment Fund are to be expended for programs for the prevention and treatment of gambling addiction and other emotional and behavioral problems related to gambling and for the administration of the programs.

Oregon PGS determination was based on the following:

- There is a growing body of evidence that engagement in social casino type games, a popular activity among children and young adults, increases the likelihood that they will engage in actual gambling activities and experience gambling-related problems.<sup>2</sup>
- The blurring of boundaries between video games and gambling activities has led to a range of concerns that include: the targeting of vulnerable populations (most notably young people) through “gambling-like” experiences; and increased penetration of gambling using socially accepted vehicles, whether sports or video games.<sup>3</sup>
- A crosswalk of **gaming** warning signs with warning signs for at-risk or problem gambling behaviors:
  - How much time is spent gaming
  - Canceling other plans to game
  - Intensity of interest in gaming (constant high tension/excitement)
  - Gaming when there is a crisis
  - Drop off in other activities and interest
  - Withdrawal from family and/or friends (isolating)
  - Excessive phone use/internet use
  - Personality changes (increased irritability/hostility)

- Competitive video gaming, also known as E-Sports, is a fast-growing international phenomenon, a billion-dollar industry with millions of fans. Streaming services and live events have turned casual video games into competitions globally. More than 50 colleges have varsity Esports programs, recognized by a governing body called the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE).
- Gaming Disorder has been recognized by the World Health Organization and the International Classification of Diseases-11 (ICD-11).
- Many video games also include in game (chance based) gambling opportunities such as:
  - Casino style games with roulette wheels or slot machines
  - Loot boxes where players can use virtual or actual currency to open a virtual container within the game and receive whatever item is inside
  - Video games built around a “freemium model” where the game is free to download but player is provided the opportunity to play for a chance to advance in the game
- The reward circuitry of the brain lights up in anticipation of a win during **gaming** behaviors, similar to the brains reward circuitry response in anticipation of a win during gambling behaviors.

Problem Gambling Prevention Professionals, by virtue of their training, have the ability to integrate **gaming** into existing prevention strategies while discussing the risk of gambling behaviors. Gambling and **gaming** are forms of entertainment but for some they carry risk for developing a problem. It is important to raise awareness that there are ways for individuals to participate in these activities while still protecting themselves from those potential risks.

1. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gaming>

2. Derevensky and Gainsbury, *supra* note 7; Gainsbury et al., *supra* note 4; Griffiths, *Adolescent Gambling*, *supra* note 7; Ipsos MORI, *Underage Gambling in England and Wales: A Research Study Among 16 Year Olds on Behalf of the National Lottery Commission* (London: National Lottery Commission, 2011).

3. Lopez-Gonzalez, H., & Griffiths, M. D. (2016). Understanding the convergence of markets in online sports betting. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.