



# We'll See You at the Game!

## Problem Gambling Outreach at College Sporting Events

Megan Poliquin, LPCC-S, LICDC-GAMB

Allison Huss, LPCC, LICDC-GAMB

Aubrey Price, LSW, CDCA



# Megan Poliquin, LPCC-S, LICDC-GAMB

---

- Manager of Gambling Treatment at Zepf Center in Toledo, Ohio
- Has been treating gambling disorder since 2018
- Passionate about building the gambling treatment workforce
- University of Toledo alumna (Go Rockets!)
- **Favorite Team**: Toledo Walleye & Red Wings

[mpoliquin@zepfcenter.org](mailto:mpoliquin@zepfcenter.org)

419-841-7701 x6189



# Allison Huss, LPCC, LICDC-GAMB

---

- Gambling Treatment Counselor at Zepf Center in Toledo, OH
- Primarily treats gambling disorder, in addition to co-occurring substance use and mental health
- Provides both individual & group gambling treatment
- Created therapy group centered around financial literacy in recovery
- **Favorite Team**: Green Bay Packers!

[ahuss1@zepfcenter.org](mailto:ahuss1@zepfcenter.org)

419-841-7701 x6191

# Aubrey Price, LSW, CDCA

---



- Gambling Treatment Counselor at Zepf Center in Toledo, OH
- Primarily treats gambling disorder, in addition to co-occurring substance use and mental health
- Provides both individual & group gambling treatment
- Currently obtaining Master's in Social Work
- **Favorite Team**: Ohio State Buckeyes & Cincinnati Reds

[aprice@zepfcenter.org](mailto:aprice@zepfcenter.org)

419-841-7701 x6229

# Real Quick...



We are NOT researchers nor PhDs

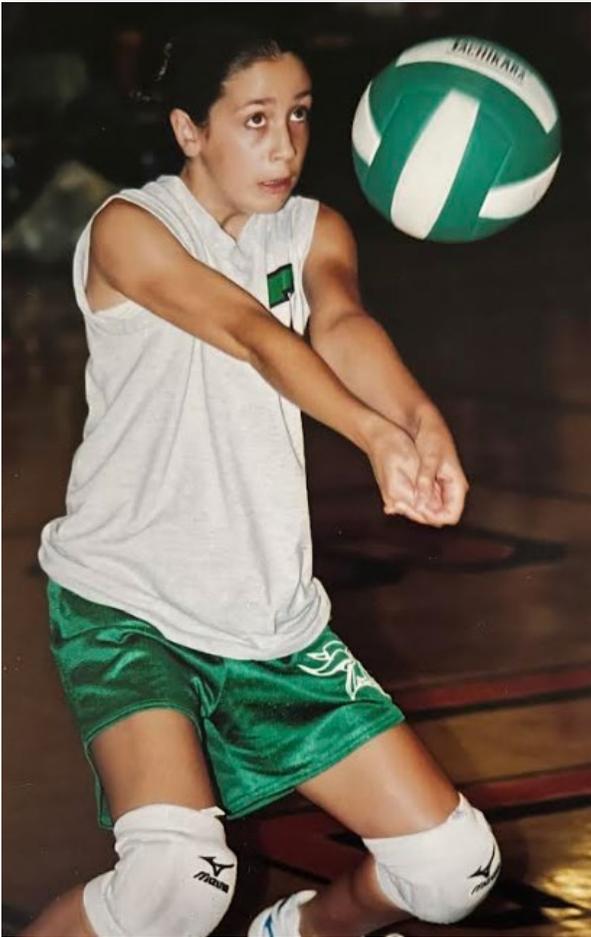


We took 1 statistics class in school



We happen to be very passionate about the topic we are going to share with you today

# Former Athletic Stars...



# Agenda

Overview of 2022  
Ohio Gambling  
Survey Data

College Students  
& Problem  
Gambling

Zepf Center  
Partnerships

Insights from the  
Field

Practical Tools &  
Tips

Q & A

# Who is Zepf Center?

---

- Trauma-informed behavioral healthcare resource for over 50 years in Toledo, Ohio
  - Substance use treatment, medicated assisted treatment, detox, recovery housing, mental health treatment, psychiatry, integrated care, crisis care, youth services, family support, primary care, vocational services, gambling treatment
- **Mission:** *Creating hope & recovery through integrated person-centered services*
- **Vision:** *To be the Leader in Hope and Recovery*
- **Motto:** *Hope Begins Here*
- Started providing gambling treatment services in 2014



# 2022 Ohio Gambling Survey

---

- An estimated **19.8% of** adult Ohioans can be categorized as low-risk, moderate-risk or problem gamblers. For context:
  - in 2017 it was 10.3%
  - in 2012 it was 5.7%
- **18–24-year-olds** have the highest rates of at-risk or problem gambling at **24%**, followed by **ages 25-44 (22%)**
- The 2 most common forms of gambling for at-risk gamblers in Ohio were **lottery** and **sports** (excluding other)
  - **Note:** Ohio legal sports betting not live until 2023
- Problem gambling is often related to risk factors including family history of gambling problems, using alcohol or drugs, gambling while intoxicated, experiencing serious depression and/or serious stress.

# The Five A's

College students are particularly prone to falling into problem gambling due to what researchers Donald Nowak and Ariel Aloe, both at the University of Buffalo, call “**the Five A's:**”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Problem Gambling & the “College Experience”

- Gambling has become increasingly common on college campuses
  - Greek life hosting casino nights, dorm poker contests, raffles, 50/50 drawings at the football games
- Sports betting has emerged as the latest *“trend”* among students
  - Students feel more connected, part of the social scene, & can join in the conversation
- It makes students feel more involved in the game
  - Adds a fresh level of excitement & anticipation when watching
- Appears as a **harmless** way to enhance the *“college experience”*



# Zepf Collaboration with More Than a Bet



**Purpose:** Reduce negative impact of sports betting on athletes' mental health & foster responsible behavior among bettors.



**Goal:** To offer guidance for individuals placing bets, specifically those inclined to send harmful messages to athletes.



**How?** By offering tips & strategies to help bettors recognize when to take a step back & manage their emotions.



**Why?** Encouraging bettors to pause promotes healthier coping mechanisms, benefiting both the bettor & the athlete.



# Care for yourself with these simple tips

The following self-help tips were provided in collaboration with Zepf Center's Gambling Treatment Program.

## TIP #1

### Pause before you post

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll regret later. Take a few moments to pause and think it through. Visit [PauseBeforeYouPlay.org](https://PauseBeforeYouPlay.org) for more tips.

## TIP #2

### Blow off steam

Physical activity is one of the best ways to burn off extra energy when you're upset. Take a walk, go for a run, or do some quick jumping jacks or sit-ups. It will give you time to recognize, reflect, and respond appropriately.

## TIP #3

### Take a timeout

It's no surprise that we get upset when the game doesn't go our way. It can be helpful to take a timeout to cool off and clear your mind. For more support, opt into [Time Out Ohio's](#) self-ban program.

## TIP #4

### Practice relaxation skills

When your temper flares, practice mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing or meditation to help you regulate your emotional responses. Download the RecoverMe app via [TimeOutOhio.com/RecoverMe](https://TimeOutOhio.com/RecoverMe) to learn more.

## TIP #5

### Keep it fun

Sports betting is designed to be fun. If betting has you feeling out of control, angry, or stressed, consider it a red flag and ask yourself, "Am I even having fun anymore?" Visit [KeepItFunOhio.com](https://KeepItFunOhio.com) to explore more resources.

## TIP #6

### Know when to seek help

If betting is getting the best of you, you're not alone. Call the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-589-9966 or text 4HOPE to 741741. Trained and understanding specialists are standing by 24/7 to provide free and confidential support.



# Humanity won after Toledo-Akron football game

- Dylan Cunanan, freshman Toledo kicker
  - 13/13 field goals made before 11/26/24
  - First UT kicker with two 47+ yard FGs in 1 game
  - Made a 54-yard field goal, 2<sup>nd</sup> longest in program history
- November 26<sup>th</sup> vs. Akron
  - Missed 3 field goals, including a would-be-game-winner from 29 yards
- Both Toledo & Akron players were seen consoling Dylan
  - *"...He is a person too, and he needs to know that."*
  - *"He's a true freshman. He's a fantastic kicker. I know what he's going to go through. And I care."*
  - *"When something like that happens, you've just got to remind him that it doesn't define you."*
  - *"I didn't hope he missed at all, never is there a time where a kicker walks out there and I hope they miss."*

*"Kickers do have the unique challenge of having the weight of an entire game rest on their performance on a given play."*

<https://x.com/NicoleWeavingTV/status/1861625031345787174>

# The Dark Side

- Earlier this season, Smith (Akron kicker) missed two field goals vs. Western Michigan.
- Sports bettors flooded his social media with harassment
  - *“I had to turn off some comments, and I may have sent some people harassing me in the [direct messages] links to gambling addiction websites to go get help.”*
  - *“You can think that our games are small, but people who put money on the game just don't understand that there's an actual person behind that phone.”*
  - *“I don't even have notifications on my social media. It's helped me separate myself from the mental aspect. You can't escape it, especially when people are posting about it and DM'ing you. Sometimes you just have to turn your phone off.”*

Ya know, if I was a college kicker, meaning I was on a 5-6 figure scholarship for literally kicking the football, I'd sure as damn shit be able to make a 26 yards field goal. If I was so shitty I missed that on the first try, I'd sure as shit make sure I nail the 29 yd fg later

@NCAA I have reason to believe Toledo kicker “Dylan Cunanan” was purposely underperforming tonight due to gambling violations. I want a full investigation launched ASAP and my money back from that bet. I would appreciate if you could try to get @DylanCunanan\_ cut from the team...

Dylan Cunanan on the other hand doesn't understand the opportunity he's been gifted and flushed it down the drain

Dylan Cunanan needs to be banned from sports

@ToledoFB Dylan Cunanan does not need to be anywhere near a football field. A total disgrace



# University of Toledo Partnership

- Ribbon Board LED & Scoreboard for football season
  - Football (~25,000 fans at Glass Bowl)
  - Basketball (~7,000 fans at Savage Arena)
- On-site activation tables at 6 football & 6 basketball games
- Campus Event sponsor during key stress points (football season, holidays, exam week, March madness)
- Meeting with Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and Athletic staff
- Social media content on University of Toledo athletic accounts
- Featured in Rocket E-weekly Newsletter

# The Mission is Simple

1

Increase awareness of Gambling Treatment Program & resources for college students.

2

Increase awareness & education regarding gambling & sports betting harms.

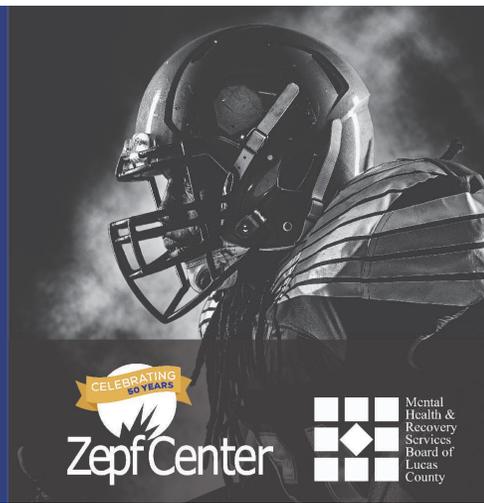
3

Collect as many Brief Biosocial Gambling Screens as possible on the University of Toledo's campus to share insights & data.



# LET'S TACKLE PROBLEM GAMBLING.

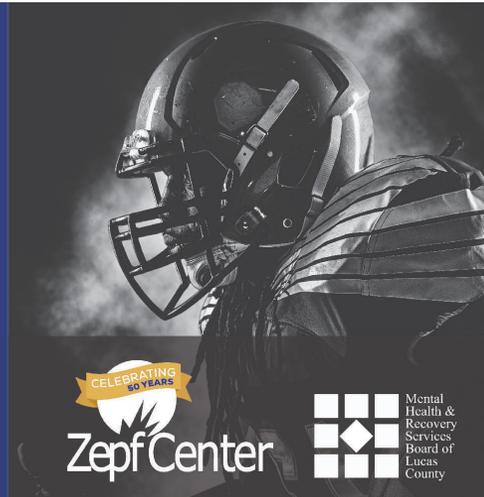
**Call us today!**  
**419-841-7701 ext 6189**



# DON'T FUMBLE YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE.

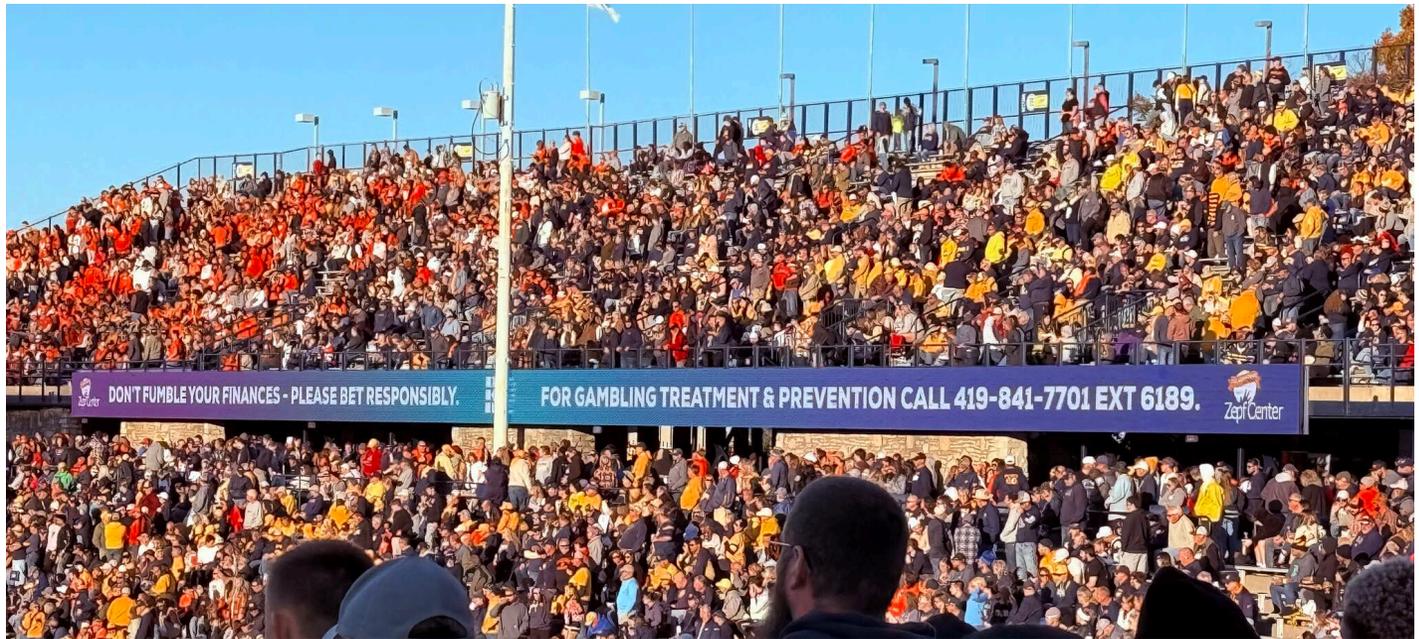
*Set limits and bet responsibly.*

**For Gambling Treatment & Prevention  
call 419-841-7701 ext 6189**



**DON'T FUMBLE YOUR FINANCES - PLEASE BET RESPONSIBLY.**

**FOR GAMBLING TREATMENT & PREVENTION CALL 419-841-7701 EXT 6189.**





Mental Health & Recovery Services Board of Lucas County

**TROUBLE REBOUNDED FROM YOUR GAMBLING LOSSES?**  
*WE'RE HERE TO HELP.*

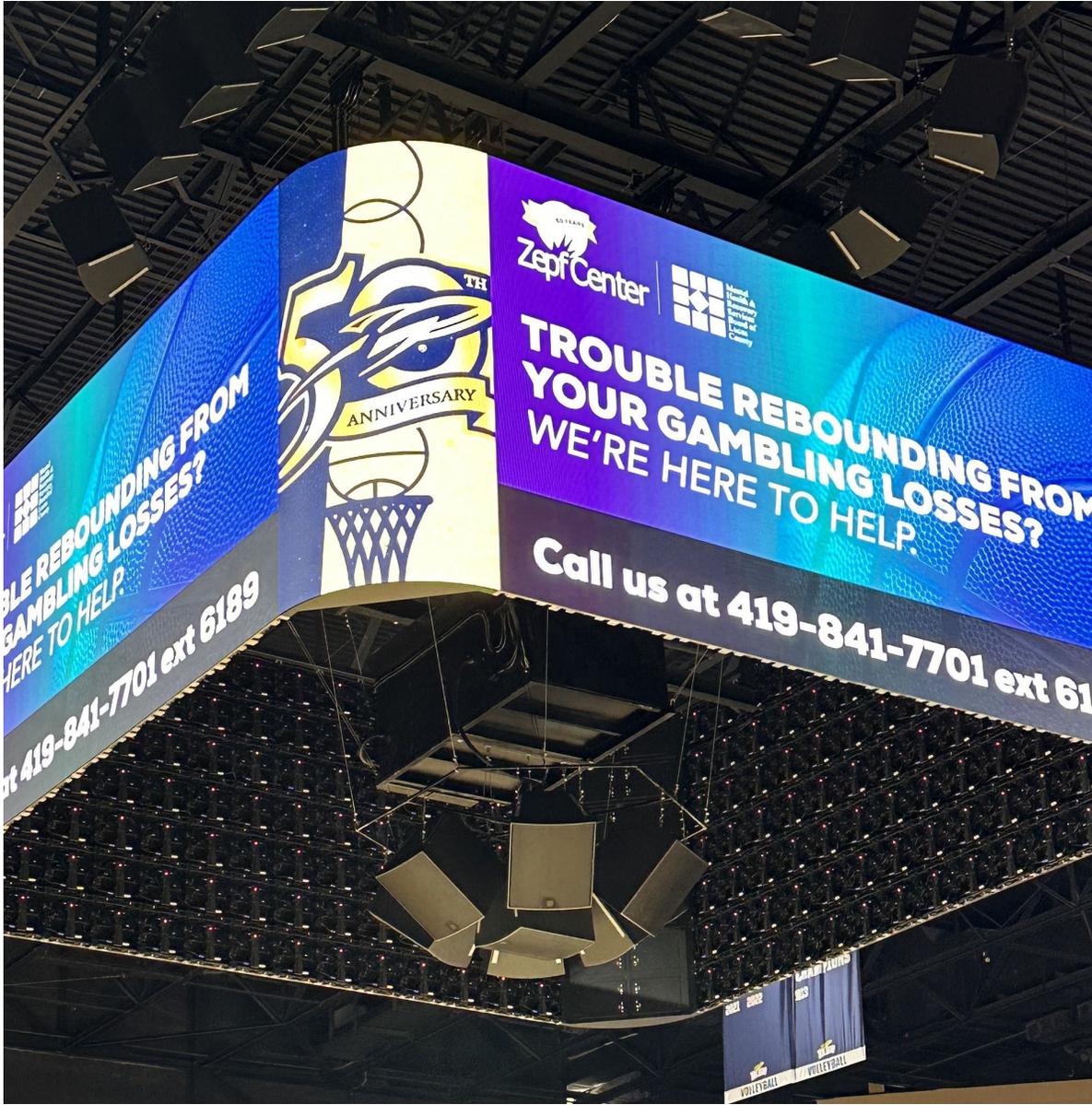
**Call us at 419-841-7701 ext 6189**



**Have a game plan.**  
Bet Responsibly.

Call Zepf Center at (419) 841-7701







Toledo Rockets

March 20 at 3:36 PM

March Madness is here, but the ball is in your court 🏀

Remember to keep gambling fun by setting limits and betting responsibly. If you or someone you know is struggling with gambling, visit [zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/](http://zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/) to learn about free, confidential treatment options.

#TeamToledo | Zepf Center

UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO ATHLETICS

Zepf Center

**DON'T BET ON IT.**

If you or someone you know is struggling with problem gambling, Zepf Center is here to help.

TEAM TOLEDO

MANUFACTURED IN THE GLASS CITY TOLEDO, OH | USA

## Rocket E-Weekly Newsletter

VIEW FULL TOLEDO ATHLETICS CALENDAR

Schedules are subject to change.

## Rocket Sponsor Spotlight

Zepf Center

Let's tackle problem gambling.

Call us at 419-841-7701 ext 6189





## WIN A PRIZE!



**GAMBLING  
TREATMENT  
& PREVENTION  
PROGRAMS**

**P:** 419-841-7701 x6189  
**W:** [zeptcenter.org](http://zeptcenter.org)



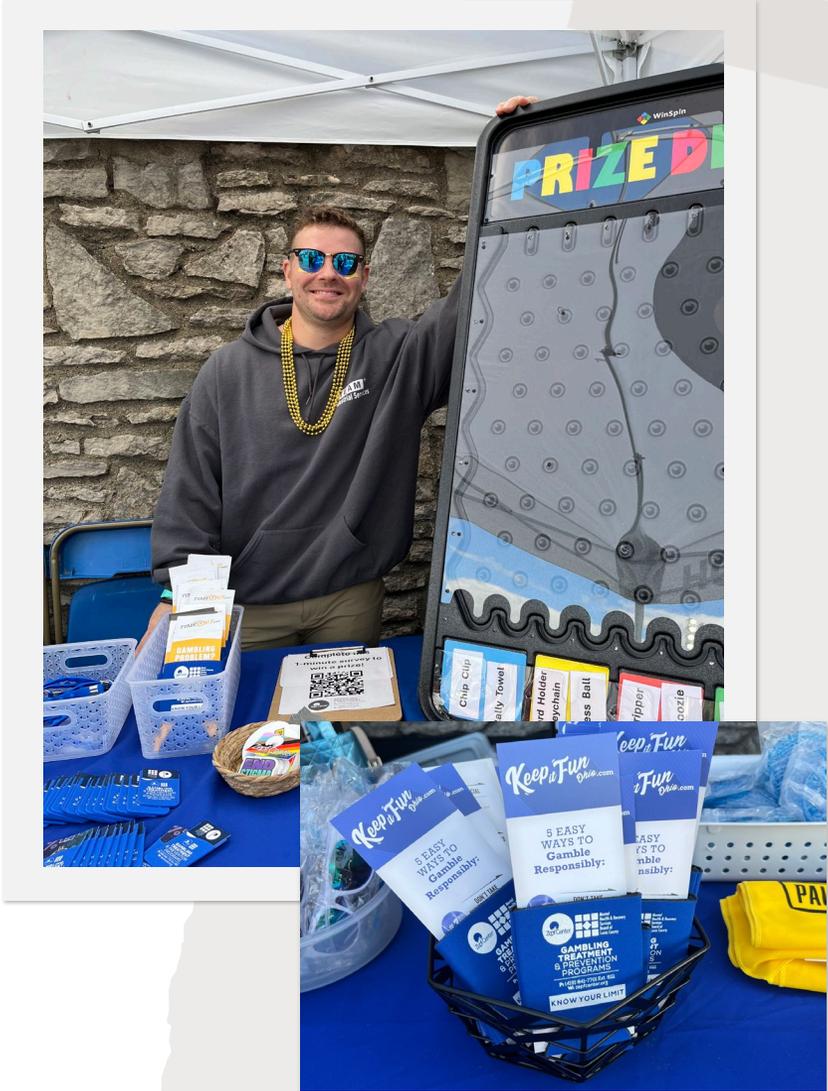
## Our Method

With tables set up on the concourse, ask students and fans to complete a brief survey to win a prize.

# Assertive Outreach

- Build Rapport & Trust by being Persistent & Purposeful
- Match the Vibe
  - Know your audience & tailor your tone
  - Bring the energy
- Quiet tabling ≠ Impactful tabling
  - Use fun to your advantage
  - Bring games or activities
  - “Win a prize!” is more engaging than “Fill out a survey!”
- Embrace questions & curiosities
- Include marketing material in your freebies

*It isn't the client's job to engage with you. It's your job to find effective ways to engage.*



Thank you Ohio for Responsible Gambling (ORG)!



# Pro Partnerships: Toledo Walleye & Mudhens

- Affiliates of Detroit Red Wings & Detroit Tigers
- Toledo named #2 minor league sports market in the country
- Known to set franchise records for attendance & sellouts
- Partnerships included:
  - Ribbon board & digital TV signage
  - On-site activation tables
  - Social media PSA posts on problem gambling



**SPORTS  
BETTING  
GOT YOU  
ON THIN  
ICE? WE  
CAN HELP.**





Toledo Walleye  
March 20 at 9:10 AM · 🌐

Pause the betting, enjoy the sport! Free, confidential problem gambling support is available for Ohioans.

Visit [www.zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/](http://www.zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/) to learn more. [Zepf Center](#) [#ProblemGambling](#) [#ZepfCenter](#) [#GamblingTreatment](#)



Toledo Walleye  
February 25 · 🌐

Sports betting got you skating on thin ice? If gaming and sports betting are no longer fun, support is available.

Visit [www.zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/](http://www.zepfcenter.org/gambling-treatment-program/) to learn more. [Zepf Center](#) [#ProblemGambling](#) [#ZepfCenter](#) [#GamblingTreatment](#)





# The Survey

1. What is your age?

2. What is your sex?

3. What is your race?

Demographics

4. Do you have a sports betting or gambling app on your phone?

5. Do you know someone who you think might have a gambling problem?

Polling  
Questions

6. During the past 12 months, have you become restless, irritable or anxious when trying to stop or cut down on sports betting or gambling?

7. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you sports bet or gambled?

Brief Biosocial  
Gambling Screen

8. During the past 12 months, did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling or sports betting that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?





Uh... do I have to  
put my name?

# Anonymous Surveys



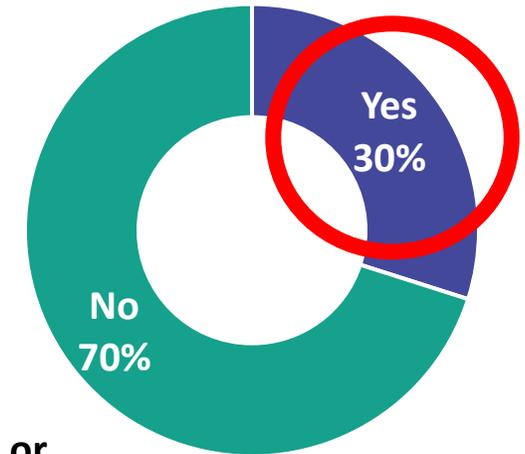
- Anonymity encourages **honesty** and creates **safety**
- Support is still accessible – staff are present to offer resources
- Clinical insight: Lying is a symptom for Gambling Disorder
- *Would you be more likely to answer a survey honestly if you knew your response wasn't linked to your identity?*

*“Lies to family members, therapist, or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling”*

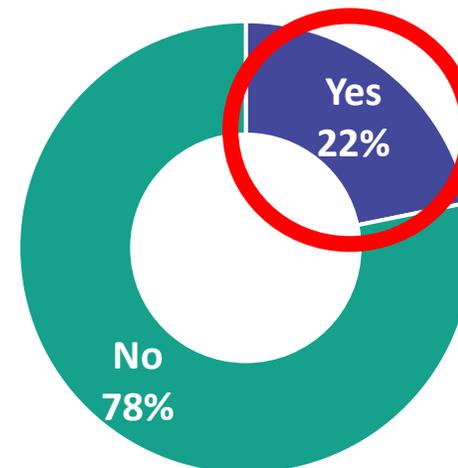
# Quick Stats

- **19 Events:** 6 football, 6 basketball, 4 hockey, 3 baseball
- **2,297** Brief Biosocial Gambling Screens
- **11%** scored positive, indicating likely gambling-related harm
- **22%** of surveys said “Yes” to having a sports betting or gambling app on their phone.
- **30%** of surveys said “Yes” to knowing someone they think might have a gambling problem.

Do you know someone who you think might have a gambling problem?



Do you have a sports betting or gambling app on your phone?



# Insights by Sport

	Football	Basketball	Hockey	Baseball
Games Attended	6	6	4	3
Total BBGS	1,162	527	434	174
<b>% Positive</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
Total Survey Majority	White Male Under 21	White Female 65+	White Female 25-44	White Female 25-44
<b>Positive Survey Majority</b>	<b>White Male Under 21</b>	<b>White Male Under 21</b>	<b>White Male 45-64</b>	<b>White Male 25-44</b>
Total Polling – App?	26% yes	16% yes	20% yes	20% yes
<b>Positive Polling – App?</b>	<b>71% yes</b>	<b>49% yes</b>	<b>47% yes</b>	<b>67% yes</b>
Total Polling – Know someone?	37% yes	24% yes	20% yes	29% yes
<b>Positive Polling – Know someone?</b>	<b>70% yes</b>	<b>76% yes</b>	<b>60% yes</b>	<b>67% yes</b>

# Total Surveys = 2,297

African American	White	2 or more Races	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic	Other	Unknown
10%	74%	3%	2%	0%	4%	5%	2%	1%

Under 21	21-24	25-44	45-64	65+
31%	10%	24%	21%	13%

Male	Female	Other
53%	46%	1%

Majority of Surveys White, Under 21 and Male

# Positive Surveys = 255 (11.1%)

African American	White	2 or more Races	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic	Other	Unknown
20%	54%	5%	6%	2%	5%	5%	3%	1%

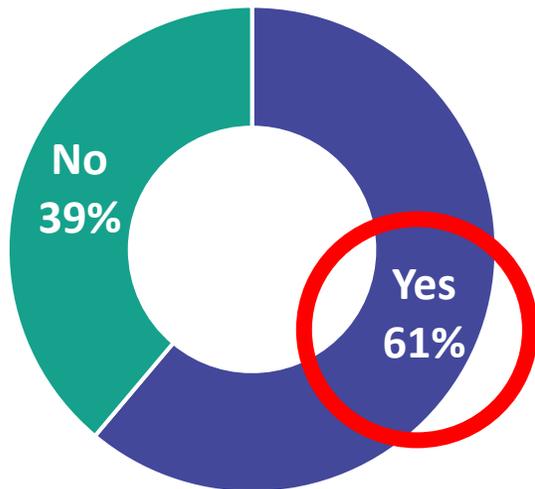
Under 21	21-24	25-44	45-64	65+
39%	19%	21%	14%	6%

Male	Female	Other
75%	21%	2%

Majority of Positive Surveys White, Under 21 and Male

# Positive Polling Questions

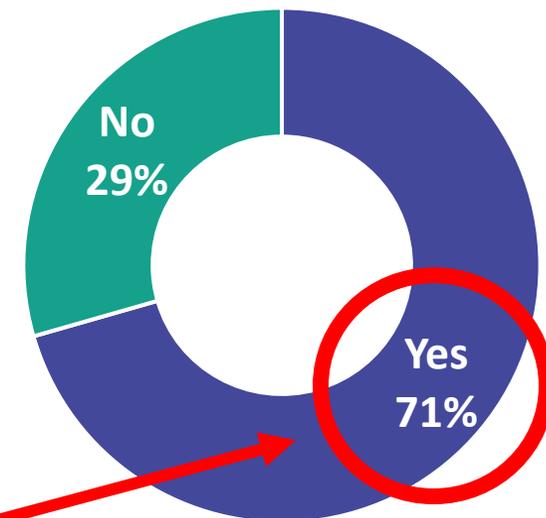
Do you have a sports betting or gambling app on your phone?



Compare this with Total Surveys of 22% having an app, and 30% knowing someone with a gambling problem

Is this indicating a higher need for family support than we thought?

Do you know someone who you think might have a gambling problem?



# Insights by Race

	African American	White	2 or more Races	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Asian	Hispanic	Other	Unknown
Total Surveys	224	1691	74	46	8	90	108	37	19
Positive Surveys	51	138	12	15	4	12	12	3	8
% of positive	23%	8%	16%	33%	50%	13%	11%	8%	42%

23% of African Americans completing survey scored positive

# Insights by Age

	Under 21	21-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Unknown
Total Surveys	716	240	557	488	291	5
Positive Surveys	99	49	53	35	15	4
% of positive	13%	20%	10%	7%	5%	80%

20% of respondents aged 21-24 scored positive on BBGS

# Insights by Sex

	Male	Female	Other	Unknown
Total Surveys	1211	1067	12	7
Positive Surveys	191	54	5	5
% of positive	16%	5%	42%	71%

16% of Males completing survey scored positive

# Summary of Data

- **Potential correlations:**
  - Having a sports betting or gambling app on your phone and positive BBGS
  - Knowing someone who you think might have a gambling problem and positive BBGS
- **Potential at-risk populations:**
  - Males
  - African Americans
  - Ages 21-24
  - Affected others/loved ones

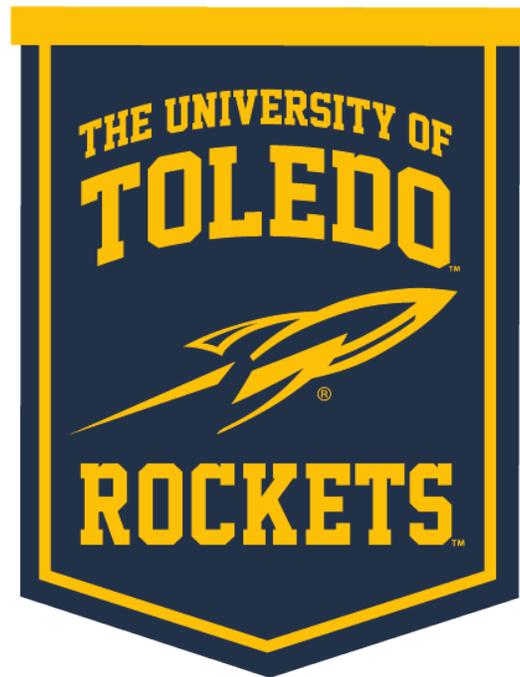


# Insights from University of Toledo

---

*"The University of Toledo is grateful for our partnership with the Zepf Center to promote safe gambling practices within our fanbase and campus community. **We recognize the daily dangers that sports gambling poses to our students and athletes, and we have found the ideal partner in the Zepf Center to address these challenges. This collaboration aligns with our institutional mission to foster an environment that prioritizes student success, health, and well-being through learning, discovery, and engagement.** The real-time data we receive through this unique partnership is invaluable, and Zepf Center's on-site presence at our major events enables us to directly engage the community with timely messaging, highlighting critical resources and support services for those in need."*

Robert Rice, General Manager, Rocket Sports Properties



*"The partnership with Zepf has had a positive impact on Toledo gamedays with their outreach to "tackle" problem gambling. Being on a college campus we know that it seems so easy to place bets on our favorite teams, because it is fun and there is a potential to win, but **Zepf has shown our students and fans that there are real issues and dangers with doing this that they might not be aware of. Zepf does this in a fun way that helps bring the energy to our games!**"*

Nick Schommer, Partnership Services Coordinator



Chatting with Mark Beier "Voice of the Rockets" for a Pre-Game Radio Interview



Chatting with TaTiana Cash from WTOL about the rise in college student gambling

**Involve the Media – What you're talking about is important!**

# Challenges

---

- **Access & Buy-in:** Getting a foot in the door takes polite persistence
- **Start Small:** Launching imperfectly is better than not at all
- **Survey Limitations:** Starting from scratch, potential duplicates, tech issues
  - **Paper vs. Digital:** QR codes weren't always reliable, paper back-ups helped
- **Staffing & Scheduling:** Events often fall outside of work hours, team flexibility is essential
- **Engaging all Ages:** Different generations need different approaches
- **Environmental Factors:** Weather, noise, & crowds all impact set-up & engagement
- **Cost:** Staffing + Freebies = Expensive

# Tips & Tricks

---

- **Lean into student section themes:** dress the part & match the vibe!
- **Keep surveys shorts & accessible:** QR codes + paper backups = great combo
- **Match the giveaways to the event:** The more freebies the better!
- **Leverage community partnerships:** ask for help!
- **Engage the whole crowd:** Don't wait for them to come to you
- **Have FUN!**
- **Reflect & adjust:** What worked? What didn't?
- **Learn from our experience:** *What would you do differently?*

# It Takes a Village ... Thank you!

