



*An initiative of WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL*

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

**America's 2nd Fastest Growing Addiction**

Dear Pastor,

Many in your congregation are looking forward to this Sunday. For some it may be for church, for others it'll be the Green Bay Packers' season opener at the Minnesota Vikings. As a fourth generation Packer's season ticket holder, I know I(Daniel) am looking forward to Packer season! However, spouses in your church may not be.

In 2021, Americans wagered \$52.7 billion on legalized sports betting. My first assumption was that this didn't impact the evangelical church. The same study, however, found that one in five adults said they bet on sports at least once a month. With numbers that high, one could assume that many churches in our state have at least one person involved in sports gambling. With how heavily our culture markets sports gambling, we shouldn't be shocked. Last year the sports betting industry spent \$1.2 billion on marketing. Some experts say sports betting is America's 2nd fastest growing addiction.

These numbers and realities concern us for our communities and churches. As a result of sports gambling addictions, there are families in our communities that are filing for bankruptcy and others that are on the verge of divorce. The National Gambling Impact Study estimated that pathological gamblers were 53.5% likely to divorce compared to non-gamblers, who had an 18.2% likelihood of divorce. Other studies show that every dollar spent on gambling costs \$3 in social spending.

The most concerning thing for me is that this addiction is being caught by the next generation. Last year while at a Packers game, I spoke with a dad and son (middle-school) who sat by us. They told me how excited they were about Aaron Rodgers' performance because they had bet \$1000 that he would be the NFL MVP. With stories like that we shouldn't be surprised to see the negative effects of sports gambling on the next generation.

A recent study found that 60% to 80% of high school students report having gambled for money in the past year. This study found that 4% to 6% of high schoolers are considered addicted to gambling. It's safe to say that a good number of these are related to sports betting.

Churches can play a vital role in helping people, especially young people, not get addicted to gambling and in assisting those who are addicted, whether from sports betting or other forms of gambling that are so readily available in our state. You can learn more about how gambling is expanding in Wisconsin at our partner organization Citizens Against Expanded Gambling's website.

In Christ,



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PS: Our organization is in a sprint from today through early November. We'll be visiting 9 Wisconsin cities where our President Julaine Appling is equipping Christians to own their backyard for Christ's glory. If you live in or near Oconomowoc, Wausau, Stevens Point, West Bend, Appleton, Green Bay, Eau Claire, Oshkosh or La Crosse, we hope you and your church family can join us. Click [HERE](#) for details and to register for our event "Your Backyard: Own It!"