

Substance Misuse and Problem Gambling

What Student-Athletes Should Know

Substance misuse and problem gambling may negatively impact your mental and physical health and can sometimes lead to addiction. Recognizing the signs of substance misuse and problem gambling and knowing what to do can help lead to better outcomes.

WHAT ARE SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Using substances, such as alcohol or cannabis, and gambling, such as betting on sports or playing cards for money, may be considered problematic if they are **associated with challenges in relationships, academics, athletics or other daily activities.**

- **Substance misuse** occurs when someone uses alcohol, nicotine, prescription medications and other substances in ways they aren't intended and may lead to Substance Use Disorder, a mental health condition.
- **Problem gambling** occurs when someone's persistent gambling causes distress or impairs daily life, and may lead to Gambling Disorder, a mental health condition.

Recognizing the Signs

Signs of Substance Misuse

- Continuing to use substances even when it causes problems or poses risks.
- Trouble sleeping or low energy.
- Skipping classes or practices.
- Isolating from friends or family.
- Changes in performance or connection with the team.
- Neglecting appearance or hygiene.

Signs of Problem Gambling

- Betting increasing amounts of money.
- Using gambling to escape problems.
- Continuing to gamble to make up for losses.
- Missing important opportunities because of gambling.

What To Do

If you are concerned, consider reaching out for support.

- **Reach out to someone you trust** (e.g., a friend, family member, coach).
- If you think a teammate needs help, share your concern, **listen empathetically** and encourage them to talk to a trusted adult or licensed mental health professional.
- **Licensed mental health providers or other counselors** can explain effective treatment options privately and confidentially.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call, text or chat 988.

SHIFTING SUBSTANCE USE PATTERNS



While student-athlete cannabis inhalation has decreased, cannabis ingestion increased by 6% from 2017 to 2023.



Tobacco use among student-athletes is down overall, but **vaping nicotine rose 14%** between 2017 and 2023.

Additional resources and guidance on mental health education:



[NCAA Mental Health Best Practices](#)



[NCAA Sports Betting Resources](#)

