



Military Fact Sheet

The State of Washington has numerous military bases located around the state. Unfortunately, problem gambling is a significant issue with military personnel.

Statistics:

- Between 36,000 and 48,000 active duty service members have gambling problems (equating to 1 percent to 2 percent)
- 20 percent to 50 percent of problem gambling Veterans had seriously considered suicide or had attempted suicide
- \$2 billion handled in military gaming establishments, with \$120 million in revenue [2005].
- At least 5,000 slot machines located on nearly 100 military bases overseas
- US service members may legally engage in slot machine gambling at the age of 18

Why do Military Personnel and Veterans gamble?

- Readily accessible gambling opportunities
- Located in secluded areas with limited access to entertainment
- Way to pass time and enjoy its thrill
- A way to cope with boredom, loneliness, anger, stress and depression
- To feel better when going through a tough time
- Difficulty readjusting to civilian life
- Post-traumatic stress

Why don't Military Personnel and Veterans Seek help?

- No dedicated VA problem gambling prevention, education or treatment services
- Fear of losing their rank or job
- Fear of losing their Veterans benefits

Consequences of Veterans Problem Gambling

- Addiction can harm their on-duty focus and damage careers
- Loss of productivity, rank or ultimately even lead to becoming discharged from duty
- Financial woes and property loss
- Significant disruption of close relationships with family members and friends
- Severe depression, feelings of hopelessness, and financial strain

“Gambling, just like drugs, allows you to keep distress, depression, and anxiety at bay and remain in control of your own mind. So, for Veterans who are distraught —maybe thinking they’re a coward because they lived and their comrades died —they sometimes think gambling can save them.” - Dr. Joseph J. Westermeyer, VA Staff Psychiatrist

