

Betting on the Second Coming: Gambling Treatment Experts Warn of Crisis as Prediction Markets & Sports Betting Converge

New analysis reveals how prediction markets, sports betting apps, and crypto gambling are fueling America's fastest-growing addiction.

GOODYEAR, AZ, UNITED STATES, February 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After Americans

wagered billions on the Super Bowl, they're already prepping for March Madness. Rick Benson, founder of one of the nation's longest-running gambling treatment programs, is warning that a new crisis is emerging at the intersection of sports betting, prediction markets, and [cryptocurrency gambling](#). One that's claiming victims far younger than traditional casino gambling ever did.

In a new report published today, Benson details how platforms like Polymarket- where users wagered more than \$3.3 million on whether Jesus Christ would return in 2025 - represent the most extreme example of a broader

trend: the "financialization of everything" that's exposing millions of Americans, particularly young men, to gambling harm without the consumer protections or treatment infrastructure to address it.

"In 30 years of treating gambling addiction, I've never seen anything like this," said Benson, an Internationally Certified Gambling Counselor who founded [Algamus](#) in 1992. "We're seeing patients who've never stepped foot in a casino, who lost everything on their phones. The average age is dropping. The speed at which people are getting into serious trouble is accelerating."

Key findings from the report include:

- Legal sports betting in the U.S. has grown from approximately \$6.6 billion in 2018 to \$150 billion in 2025, a thirty-fold increase
- 48% of men aged 18-49 now have at least one sportsbook account
- Rates of gambling disorder among young male sports bettors are several times higher than in the general population
- One in five people with gambling disorder will attempt suicide—the highest rate of any

addiction

- Prediction markets now allow betting on elections, economic outcomes, and even religious prophecy, often with fewer consumer protections than traditional sportsbooks

The report comes as federal regulators and state gaming commissions are engaged in a jurisdictional battle over whether prediction market platforms should be classified as gambling or financial exchanges, leaving consumers largely unprotected while the industry grows.

"Whether you call it gambling or trading, the brain doesn't care about the terminology," Benson said. "The dopamine response is the same. The addiction is the same. And the harm to people's lives is the same."

The full report, "You Can Now Bet on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: How Prediction Markets, Sports Betting Apps, and Crypto Gambling Are Fueling America's Hidden Addiction Crisis," is available at <https://www.algamus.org/blog/bet-on-the-second-coming-of-jesus-christ>.

Availability for Interviews:

Rick Benson is available for phone, video, or in-person interviews to discuss the convergence of prediction markets and gambling addiction, the changing profile of gambling disorder patients, and policy recommendations.

To schedule an interview, contact Rick Benson at marketing@algamus.org

About Algamus Gambling Treatment Services:

Founded in 1992, Algamus is one of the only gambling-specific residential treatment programs in the United States.

The JCAHO-accredited program, located in Goodyear, Arizona, has treated thousands of patients over more than 30 years and was featured on the first episode of A&E's Intervention.

Algamus focuses exclusively on gambling addiction and related disorders, with a staff that includes multiple Internationally Certified Gambling Counselors, many of whom are in recovery themselves. Learn more at algamus.org.

Resources:

National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-800-522-4700 (24/7, free, confidential)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988

Algamus Gambling Treatment Services: algamus.org | 888-960-7761

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