Gambling

Additional Information for Parents

Do you know...

- Among high school students, the percent who have ever gambled (87%) exceeds the percent who have ever used alcohol or drugs (67%).
- Students who gamble excessively are more likely to abuse substances and vice versa.
- The rate of problem gambling among high school students significantly exceeds the rate for adults.

Additional Warning Signs for Teens

- Carries or possesses gambling materials (dice, playing cards, scratch tickets)
- Missing money or possessions in the house
- Steals from family to get money for gambling
- Uses ‘other money’ (lunch, bus) to gamble; weight loss my become evident
- Personality changes: frequent mood swings
- Gamble to escape worries, frustration or disappointments
- Displaying unexplained wealth
- Unusual interest in sports scores and point spreads over favorite teams and who wins

Some Other Important Teen Facts

- 4-8% of adolescents presently have a serious gambling problem with another 10-14% of adolescents at risk for developing a serious gambling problem.
- The average age at which problem gamblers had their first contact with any sort of gambling was 10 years old.
- A recent study found that more than 50 percent of kids who gamble reported problems like over-spending. Teens record that they can win/lose as much as $150 to $200 a night.
- A recent nationwide study estimates 2.9 million young people are gambling on cards on a weekly basis.
- 84% of parents do not object to their children gambling.
- 61% of teens who gamble do it with their parent’s permission.

What can parents do?
Below is a list of suggestions for parents to help protect and educate their children and their communities.

- Examine your own attitudes and behaviors concerning gambling.
- Learn the facts about gambling: age restrictions, types of gambling, and gambling terminology.
- Educate yourself on the warning signs of problem gambling and be cognizant of changes in behavior that might indicate a problem.
- Talk to your children about the risks associated with gambling.
- Be responsible role models; practice what you preach.
- Help form a collaborative network among parents, teachers, youth workers, coaches and other role models in the community to raise awareness and support healthy gambling behaviors.
- Request that schools provide education about gambling and problem gambling, just as they do for substance abuse.

What can high schools do?

- Establish and enforce policies regarding gambling in school for students and staff.
- Evaluate those who break school polices for potential gambling problems.
• Eliminate the following: Las Vegas Night type activities on prom and graduation nights, gambling-related fundraisers, and sports pools associated with staff, parent, and student activities.
• Incorporate a module on gambling and problem gambling into the Health and Education Curriculum.
• Run stories on problem gambling and/or recovering gamblers in the school newspaper.
• Use school-based drama groups to teach about gambling in an entertaining form.
• Create or include information resources for a student health fair.
• Conduct a poster/video contest to create a positive message about gambling and problem gambling prevention.

What do we know so far? Research has shown that adolescent problem gamblers:

• are more likely to be boys but girls seem to be catching up
• are overly represented as a group compared to adult problem gamblers
• are greater risk takers in general
• often show signs of lower self esteem
• tend to report higher rates of depression
• often gamble to escape problems
• are more likely to develop an addiction(s)
• seem to be more excitable and outgoing
• are more anxious and less self-disciplined
• are at greater risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts
• often replace their regular friends with gambling acquaintances
• have poor general coping skills
• report beginning gambling at an early age (approximately 10)
• often recall an early big win
• report more daily hassles and major traumatic life events
• often have parents, relatives, or friends who gamble
• are more likely to be delinquent and involved in criminal activities to acquire money
• develop problems with family and friends
• move quickly from just gambling with friends and family to problem gambling
• show decreased academic performance

Taken from the International Center for youth Gambling Problems www.education.mcgill.ca/gambling

Quick Survey
Below is a quick questionnaire you be might have your teen complete if you are worried about a gambling problem. This not a diagnostic tool but it may give you some idea if further help is needed!

• Is gambling the most exciting activity in your life?
• Do you miss school, activities, or other events due to gambling?
• Has anyone expressed concern about your gambling?
• Do you lie to your friends or family about your gambling?
• Do you borrow money to gamble?
• Have you sold personal belongings to get money to gamble?
• Have you stolen from your family, friends, or employer to gamble or to pay back gambling debts?
• After losing, do you try to win your money back by gambling?
• Are you preoccupied with thoughts of gambling?
• Have you tried to stop gambling but can’t?