



A Program of Wheeler Clinic

800.232.4424 (Voice/TTY) 860.793.9813 (Fax)
www.ctclearinghouse.org



Youth and Gambling: What Everyone Needs to Know

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Gambling has become mainstream, accepted and glamorized. It is increasingly popular among all age groups, including youth. Some forms of gambling have become a "rite of passage" for adolescents. Research has consistently suggested that young people experience problems with gambling more frequently than adults do.

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO?

Don't minimize the seriousness of youth gambling.

- Rates of moderate to severe problem gambling for youth are more than twice that of adults (13 percent compared to 5.5 percent). (Shaffer, et. al, 1999)
- Adolescent problem gamblers remain at increased risk for the development of other addictions or multiple addictions.
- Adolescent problem gamblers have higher rates of depression than adolescent social gamblers or non-gamblers do.
- Adolescents with serious gambling problems have poor general coping skills and lower self-esteem than other adolescents do.
- Adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 with serious gambling problems are at heightened risk for suicide ideation and suicide attempts.

R.Gupta and J. Derevensky, McGill University, *Journal of Gambling Studies* Vol. 16, No. 2/3, 2000

Share these messages with young people.

- "The choice to abstain from gambling as a lifelong practice is a legitimate choice that many people make."
- "We do not want you to ever gamble illegally." (In Connecticut a person must be 21 to gamble at a casino and 18 to purchase a lottery ticket. However, not all gambling activities are illegal for youth. There is no age limit on the playing of "charitable games" such as bingo and raffles, or at church fairs.)
- "If you choose to gamble, we want you to know enough about gambling to lower your risk of gambling problems." Adapted from Roger Svendsen and the Minnesota Department of Public Health

Model appropriate attitudes and behavior.

- If you gamble, treat it as a form of entertainment that has a cost you have thought about in advance, and that you are prepared to pay both financially and emotionally.
- Don't glamorize gambling. Be realistic. There are winners and losers, and almost all people are losers in the long run.
- Don't brag about winning or misrepresent the true cost of gambling.
- Don't involve young people in adult gambling activities.
- Don't model that gambling makes competition and sporting events more fun. If you are around young people, avoid talking about adult gambling activities or wearing clothing with gambling themes or logos.

(continued)

Here are some important considerations for adults to keep in mind about their own gambling as well as adolescents’:

- Gambling is not a risk-free activity. Many people develop problems with gambling; some become addicted to the gambling “high” and experience severe negative consequences to finances, family relationships, school or work, self-esteem, and emotional health.
- Gambling losses can lead to risky behavior to try to recoup losses or pay debts. Violence may be a consequence of being unable to pay off lost bets.
- Gambling wins can stimulate a powerful high that for some people becomes the seed of gambling problems.

Setting Personal Guidelines

- There are certain high-risk situations during which gambling should be avoided:

When feeling lonely, angry, depressed, or under stress

When coping with the death or loss of a loved one

When trying to solve any personal or family problems

When trying to impress others

When using alcohol or any other drug

- There are times when people should not gamble:

When the gambling activity is illegal

When the gambling interferes with one’s school, work, or family responsibilities

When in recovery from another addiction

When gambling is prohibited by school or work policy

When trying to make up for a gambling loss



What to do if you are concerned about your gambling or the gambling of someone you care about:

**Call the toll-free, 24-hour, confidential Helpline:
800-346-6238**

**Call Problem Gambling Services Better Choice Treatment Program:
860-344-2244**

“Our purpose is to reduce the impact of problem gambling on individuals, families, and communities by developing community capacity to provide treatment, intervention and prevention services.”

*Connecticut State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Problem Gambling Services*

Information provided by:
Problem Gambling Services
Connecticut State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Phone: 860-344-2244
www.gamblingrecovery.org