

“We hear kids talk about poker all the time and it’s not all good, but we don’t know what to do.”

Anne Marie R. – a school counselor

“At first I thought it was a good idea to have the kids playing poker. Now I’m not so sure.”

Janice M. – a parent

“I didn’t think I had a problem with poker, even after I got arrested for stealing.”

Kyle R. – a 17 year old student

“Right now there are more young people in treatment for gambling problems than during the past ten years combined. That should be a wake-up call.”

Chris Armentano

DMHAS Problem Gambling Services

“Poker is taking over my kids’ social group. It’s all they want to do.” Is it a problem?

Tanya J. – a parent

“My daughter has become aggressive about playing poker. It’s really changed her personality.” What can we do?

Carol and Tom D. – parents

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Problem Gambling Services



What’s the big deal?

Poker, like most forms of gambling, carries some degree of personal risk and can lead to a range of negative consequences of varying severity. For most young players, poker will not lead to difficulties, but for others it will be a gateway to significant problems.

The recent popularity of poker has meant that more young people, including those vulnerable to developing problems, are playing than ever before.

To keep kids safe, take a few minutes to get up to speed on the poker phenomenon and what it means for young people you care about.

What are the Potential Problems?

- Losing more than the player can afford, followed by **chasing losses** (gambling more to attempt to get the money back).
- **Credit card problems** as a result of cash advances or gambling online. A young person can ruin his/her own, or their parent’s, credit rating.
- **Interpersonal conflict** and anger over money lost and money owed. A potential for violence exists over debts or to right perceived wrongs.
- Early successes may set off attempts to use **gambling as a means to obtain “easy money”**.
- **Lying** to conceal gambling involvement, increased **boasting** about winnings and **denying** losses and debts.
- Gambling may become part of a young person’s identity: a **false image of self** as special with special skills, more clever or luckier than others.
- Players may develop an **addiction** to gambling. Like substance abusers, they may grow dependent on the “high” and experience uncontrollable impulses to gamble.
- Poker may be a **gateway to more addictive forms of gambling**. Some young poker players will move on to higher-risk situations like online gambling and illegal card rooms.

Why are youth most vulnerable?

- Adolescence is a period of increased **risk-taking, novelty-seeking and lower capacity for good judgement**. The adolescent brain is developmentally less able to weigh consequences, plan for contingencies or predict outcomes.
- Young people tend to seek low-effort/high-reward activities – **“easy-money” without hard work** is very tempting.
- A deficit in brain development may make young people **prone to increased impulsiveness**. When gambling, acting impulsively rather than thoughtfully, can lead to negative consequences.

Which youth are most vulnerable?

- Youth that have problems with **impulsivity, poor concentration and hyperactivity**.
- Youth that have a need for **excitement, are truant or are early users of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs**.
- Youth that have **emotional vulnerabilities such as low self-esteem, depression, feelings of alienation and loneliness**.

What can you do?

- **Help young people set limits and monitor the time and money spent**. Find out with whom a young person is gambling, and how much can be lost during each gambling session.
- **Be knowledgeable** about the risks of gambling.
- **Ask questions:**
 - Does gambling make you feel different, special, more complete or happy in ways that other things in your life can’t?*
 - Can you keep gambling in perspective?*
 - Do you glorify wins?*
 - Can you accept losses?*
 - Has gambling meant changing friends or neglecting your favorite activities?*
- **Counter the unrealistic image of gambling and gamblers portrayed in the media**. Remember: the vast majority of gamblers lose money.
- **Learn more** about problem gambling **and share** the information with the young people in your life.

Where to get help and information...

Problem Gambling Services
Connecticut Department of
Mental Health and
Addiction Services
860-344-2244

www.DMHAS.state.ct.us/gambling

For a toll free
confidential conversation,
call the 24-hour
Gambler’s Helpline at
1-800-346-6238

Connecticut’s Regional
Action Councils
www.ctprevention.org

or visit the
Youth Poker Website at
www.Youthpoker.org