

Recognize the Signs of Underage Problem Gambling...

Youth today are bombarded with media images and messages that depict gambling as exciting and glamorous. They are exposed to messages about the benefits of gambling and the belief that they can make a lot of money in a short time. As parents, it's important to give a balanced message about the realities of gambling, the potential risks and the consequences. In NYS, approximately 140,000 adolescents have experienced problems due to their gambling. An additional 10% are at risk for problem gambling!

Unlike other problem behaviors, gambling is the "silent addiction" with no physical signs to detect if your child either has a gambling problem or is at risk for developing a gambling problem. One in five compulsive gamblers have attempted suicide. We know teens are at greater risk than the general population for developing a gambling problem due to their vulnerability to a variety of social issues and stressors. Consider the following warning signs and see if you recognize any of these behaviors in your teen:

- Do they experience mood swings based on winnings and losses?
- Do they neglect other responsibilities in order to concentrate on gambling?
- Do they experience impatience with loved ones because they are interrupting their gambling activities?
- Are they willing to eat less or go without food so that they can gamble?
- Do they gamble with money intended for necessary expenses?
- Do they fantasize about big winnings and believe that they will win back all of their losses?

If the answer is YES to four or more of the above risks, problem gambling may be affecting your teen and your family. Other important risk factors that impact our youth include favorable attitudes toward gambling by parents and other significant adults, having friends that gamble, having a family history of gambling, starting to gamble at an early age. On a community level, the increasing availability of gambling venues as well as community attitudes that both minimize the risks of gambling and are favorable to gambling negatively impact our youth.

To learn more or to schedule a parent presentation for your school or community group call NCADD-RA at (585) 719-3480 or 719-3485 or visit our website at www.ncadd-ra.org.

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