



Youth Gambling and Problem Gambling

Youth Gambling and Problem Gambling in New York State

- 48% of 7-12th graders reported they had gambled in the past year
- 10% of adolescents in NYS (about 140,000) have had problems due to their gambling.
- An additional 10% are at risk for problem gambling.
- 28% of those adolescents who experienced problem gambling in the past year may also be in need of chemical dependence treatment.
- In 2010, state sponsored gambling generated approximately \$3.2 billion in revenues for NYS

Parent Attitude toward Gambling

Children and adolescents are more likely to gamble if they witness adults gambling, and especially if the adults show interest and excitement about gambling. On the other hand, children are put in a better position to judge the potential dangers of gambling if they are taught that gambling is an occasional activity meant for entertainment only, not as a way to make money, and that there are certain risks and negative consequences associated with engaging in gambling activities.

Why should adults not offer lottery tickets to children?

It is important not to offer lottery tickets to children and adolescents. Only individuals of legal age are allowed to buy these products. The law restricts minors' access to lotteries because of concern that lottery games act as a gateway to more problematic forms of gambling (e.g., sports betting, VLT games). Adolescents and adults with gambling problems frequently report being first introduced to gambling through lottery tickets, often bought by family members. Furthermore, lotteries can give children and adolescents a level of excitement similar to that which problem gamblers seek. Discourage friends and family members from giving tickets to underage children. Make them aware that this is not an appropriate activity or present.

Things to look for if you are concerned about teen gambling

- Does your teen often talk about gambling, or gambling products, or has begun using specialized gambling lingo like "bookies," "chips," and "point spread"?
- Do you find your teen is interested in gambling-related conversations and TV shows?
- Have you noticed changes in your teen's behavior or attitude (e.g. mood swings)?
- Has your teen been experiencing difficulties in school (e.g. loss of interest, grades dropping, and poor work performance)?
- Has he or she had unexplained absences from school?
- Do you suspect your teen has been lying to you about his or her activities?
- Has your teen been asking for more money for lunch and transportation or other personal expenses?
- Is your teen displaying large amounts of money or other material possessions which cannot be accounted for by his or her regular income?
- Have you noticed money or valuable objects missing from your house?
- Is your teen experiencing problems with other family members, or with their friends?
- Is your teen familiar with Internet gambling web sites?

Myths and Reality of Gambling

Myth: Teenagers can't develop gambling problems.

Fact: Approximately 10% of high school students have a gambling problem, and another 10% are considered at risk for gambling problems.

Myth: Lottery tickets are not a major concern with respect to problem gambling.

Fact: Lottery products are, by law, restricted to adults because it has been recognized that they may be a gateway to more problematic forms of gambling.

Myth: Teens experiencing gambling problems most often come from underprivileged and unsupervised families.

Fact: Problem gamblers come from all different backgrounds, cultures, and families.

Myth: Drug or alcohol addictions are more severe than gambling addictions.

Fact: Gambling addictions are as severe and problematic as substance addictions, and the consequences can be just as devastating for teenagers and their family members.

Myth: Playing card games without money with your children might cause later gambling problems.

Fact: Playing card games with children can teach them that this activity is fun without wagering money. However, it is important to discourage playing for money until they have the maturity and cognitive capacity to understand how to set and maintain both time and money limits.

Myth: Most gamblers are introduced to gambling by their friends.

Fact: Most gamblers are introduced to gambling by a parent or an adult close to them, often as young as 10 or 11 years of age.

Myth: Kids playing poker in the home are not at risk of developing gambling problems.

Fact: For the vast majority of teens, playing poker will not lead to problem gambling. But for a select few, this activity could very well trigger a gambling problem. Monitor your child's behavior and discourage them from playing for money.

References:

McGill University

<http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/Gambling2/en/parents/myths.php>

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