

YOUTH

Why Should We Be Concerned About Youth Gambling?

Take a look at the statistics of a study conducted by the Oregon Gambling Addiction Treatment Foundation (Carlson & Moore, 1998), which studied adolescents 13-17 years old throughout the state:

- Seventy-five percent of teens reported having gambled (4 percent reported gambling every day).
- One in ten teens is an “at-risk” gambler (he or she may be moving toward problem gambling).
- One in every 25 Oregon teens is a problem/pathological gambler.
- Almost 1/3 of teens have played the Oregon Lottery within the last year (minimum legal age to participate is 18 years old).
- The rates of problem gambling among youth are 2-4 times higher than the rates for adult gambling, and Oregon youth are gambling at a younger age than in the past (Carlson & Moore, 1998; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Shaffer & Hall, 1996).
- Youth can hide gambling problems well—there aren’t outward, notable physical signs (e.g., smell on the breath, needle marks, slurred speech).
- Many pathological gamblers report having started gambling at an early age—approximately age 10 (Gupta & Derevensky, 2001; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Gupta & Derevensky, 1997; Wynne, Smith, & Jacobs, 1996).

The Risks (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998b; Vitaro, Ferland, Jacques & Ladouceur, 1998; Wallisch & Liu, 1996; Winters & Anderson, 2000; Wynne, Smith, & Jacobs, 1996)

Teen problem gamblers have higher rates of:

- Crime (theft, robbery, embezzlement)
- School problems (e.g., lower grades, truancy, behavior issues)
- Family problems (e.g., withdrawal, behavior issues)
- Peer relationship problems
- Legal and money troubles
- Depression; suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Dissociative, “escape” behaviors
- Risk for co-occurring addiction(s), including alcohol and substance abuse

What Teens Have to Say About Gambling (Gallup, 1999)

Teens 13-17 years old (n=500):

- One in ten teens report that gambling causes problems in family.
- Almost one in three (29%) teens claim to have made their first bets when 10 years or younger.
- One in five teens say they gamble more than they should (compared to 10% of adults).
- Teens are also more positive about gambling successes—sixty-one percent claim to be ahead on wagers (only 26% of adults make same claim).

Risk Factors

Risk factors are aspects that increase the risk of a youth engaging in problem behaviors, including problem gambling. There are many unknown reasons why a youth develop problem gambling behaviors, but the following are some commonalities seen among those youth who do become problem gamblers (Derevensky & Gupta, 2000; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998b; Gupta & Derevensky, 1997):

- History of gambling in the family; in Oregon, children of parents who gamble are nearly twice as likely to be weekly or daily gamblers than children whose parents don't gamble (Carlson & Moore, 1998).
- Family history of alcoholism.
- Exposure to gambling at young age.
- Family that overemphasizes money, competition.
- Early "big win".
- Low self-esteem.
- ADHD/hyperactivity.
- Other addiction/behavioral issues.
- Problems at home.
- Peer pressure.
- Loneliness/depression/boredom.
- Escape from reality.
- Coping mechanism from life's problems.
- To gain attention from peers.
- To win money (however, for adolescents with gambling problems, money is the vehicle, not the main reason, for gambling).

Protective Factors

While limited research is available studying what helps protect youth against engaging in problem gambling behaviors, the Search Institute has studied 40 factors that help young people grow into healthy, responsible adults while helping buffer them against engaging in problem behaviors. These factors, called the "40 Developmental Assets", can be found on the Search Institute website www.search-institute.org/assets. It is believed that youths are more likely more protected from problem gambling if they have:

- Support (family, community, school)
- Positive outlook
- Realistic boundaries & expectations
- Internal locus of control
- High self-esteem
- Constructive use of time/contributing
- Good problem solving skills

What Our Youth Need To Know

- Both boys and girls can develop gambling problems
- Gambling in Oregon is illegal for anyone under 18
- The feelings to win are potentially addictive
- Pathological gambling is a disorder similar in many ways to alcohol and drug addiction
- Most youth do not gamble on a regular basis
- Help is available if they or someone they know has a gambling problem

What We ALL Can Do

- Educators increase prevention efforts through classroom education
- Educators and school administrators can review school gambling policies (e.g., bingo on campus, casino nights, etc.)
- Parents can teach kids about risks and consequences of gambling
- Communities can promote protective factors in youth (e.g., support them with healthy alternatives, bonding, good decision-making skills)
- All of us can maintain an environment encouraging open communication

For more information about potential risk and protective factors as related to youth problem gambling, or if you would like information about setting up an evidenced-based problem gambling prevention program in your area, refer to the Oregon Gambling Prevention Resource Guide online at www.gamblingaddiction.org, or contact Jeffrey Marotta Jeffery.J.Marotta@state.or.us