

Indiana Problem Gambling Awareness Program

What are the odds youth you know are gambling?

What's the big deal?

It's not news to anyone that kids are exposed to gambling every day. All they have to do is turn on the TV to see their role models in poker tournaments, go online and get pop-up ads for internet gaming sites, walk into a mini-mart to see people buying lottery tickets, or even go to church or school for casino nights or bingo fundraisers.

Truth is, we don't know about what the ultimate effects of this ongoing exposure to gambling will be for our kids. Today's generation is the first to grow up in a society where gambling is widely accepted, advertising is everywhere and gambling activities are commonplace.

What we do know is this:

- 60-90 percent of youth engage in gambling, and youth problem gambling rates are 2-4 times higher than those of adults.
- Surveys of Indiana teens tell us drugs, alcohol and gambling often travel together, yet many adults see gambling as a relatively safe pastime and encourage it as an alternative activity.
- Children and adults can and do get caught up in gambling in a way that is harmful to themselves and others around them.
- Adults who develop gambling problems often began gambling at a young age.
- Unlike other risk behaviors, most parents do not talk to their kids about gambling, leaving kids to make up their own rules.
- A small, but growing, number of college kids are leaving their studies to pursue gambling in lieu of a career.

Most kids engage in some form of gambling and most don't develop gambling problems. But as a youth leader you do need to recognize that gambling carries risk and approach it accordingly, as you would tobacco use, drug use or fastening your car's seatbelt.

Be Informed!

It's worth your while as an adult working with youth to stay informed about how increasingly easy it is for youth to gamble. This generation is very tech savvy, and gambling marketers are gearing up fast; internet gambling is on the rise and since it can be done in the privacy of one's own room it might be difficult for parents to know if their child is gambling online. As if that wasn't enough, it's now possible to gamble via cell phone, and most kids these days have one of those handy. If you don't know what the latest gambling technologies are, you can be sure the youth you work with probably do — ask them about it.

What are the signs of a possible gambling problem?

Some of these signs will sound very familiar — they are also “signs” of adolescence or being in the teenage years. But if they occur in an ongoing pattern, or if you have reason to be concerned about the teen’s gambling, here are some indicators to look for:

- ❖ Unexplained absences from school.
- ❖ Carries or possesses gambling materials, such as dice or playing cards.
- ❖ Says gambling is one of the best ways to make easy money.
- ❖ Borrows money from family/friends to pay gambling debts.
- ❖ Gambles with money that is supposed to be used for something else such as lunch, bus fare, etc.
- ❖ Neglects family/friends.
- ❖ Frequent mood swings, usually high when winning and lower when losing.
- ❖ Lies to people about gambling.
- ❖ Displays large amounts of cash and other material possessions.
- ❖ Gambles to escape worries, frustrations, or disappointments.

Key messages when talking with youth:

Gambling is not a way to make money. Games run by casinos, racetracks, internet sites, and lotteries are all designed so that most people lose money in the long run. Games are designed to make a profit for the house, not the player.

Many problem gamblers do not understand this. They believe that they are blessed with special skills or special luck that will allow them to “beat the odds.” They often “chase losses,” betting more money in the belief that they will “win back” the money they have lost. Teens need to understand that these beliefs are illogical and dangerous. Gambling carries risk and problem gambling can lead to serious consequences throughout life, including the loss of huge amounts of money, destruction of a career, legal problems, and the loss of friends and family.

Keep it simple and straight! Talk about gambling using these simple guidelines:

- ❖ Notice opportunities to discuss gambling. Help children make sense out of what they see on television, in the news and in the community.
- ❖ Be specific. When you talk about gambling, give examples such as buying a lottery ticket, betting on a sports event, playing bingo; for many kids the word “gambling” means going to a casino, and since they don’t do that they don’t think they are gambling.
- ❖ Emphasize balance and choice. Facing choices about gambling and other risky behaviors can be a good way to practice making good decisions about many life issues.

How to bring it up? Here are some tips for starting the conversation:

- ❖ Ask questions first. Find out what your youth think and feel about gambling before offering your own opinions or giving information.
- ❖ Be patient. Several discussions may be needed before youth understand the ideas that you want to communicate.
- ❖ When you talk with youth about drugs and alcohol, include problem gambling in the conversation as another potentially risky activity.

Could the problem be gambling?

Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gamble?

An answer of ‘yes’ to either or both of these questions may indicate a problem with gambling.

For a confidential referral, call 1.800.994.8448.
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