

# Awareness of Youth Gambling

## What is youth gambling?

The definition of youth gambling is a modified definition of adult gambling: an activity which implies an element of risk, and money or something of sentimental or monetary value could be won or lost by a participant. Specifically, youth gambling activities can include sports betting, poker, crane machines, dice, board games, pitching quarters, internet gambling, other card games, lottery, and pull tabs. An example of an activity that is **not** considered to be gambling is a video game since one does not bet on the result of the game. Problem gambling is defined as a gambling behavior which causes disruptions in any major area of life (psychological, physical, social, and educational/vocational) and is considered to be a progressive addiction characterized by an increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, “chasing” losses and loss of control manifested by continuation of gambling in spite of mounting, serious negative consequences.

## How prevalent is youth gambling and youth problem gambling?

A study conducted by the Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative and analyzed by Lee (2014) in the American Journal on Addictions reported that one third of the 25,456 students surveyed reported that had gambled at least once in their lifetime. Additionally, 10% of all students surveyed, or 31% of the gamblers, experienced gambling problems. Analysis of the survey data showed that male students, African-American students, and students who used drugs recreationally were more likely to develop a gambling problem.

## What are the signs of youth gambling?

- Unexplained absences from school
- Drop in grades
- Asking for/borrowing money from peers
- Large amounts of money in student’s possession
- Intense interest in gambling conversations
- Displaying money or other material possessions
- Behavior changes (e.g., day dreaming, anxious, moody, less participative, appearing tired in class)
- Using gambling “lingo” in conversations (e.g., bookie, point spread, underdog or favorite, exaggerated use of the word “bet”)
- Spending unusual amount of time reading newspapers, magazines, and/or periodicals having to do with sports
- Selling personal belongings
- Bragging about winnings
- Lying, cheating, or stealing in school

## Resources

- [National Council on Problem Gambling](#)
- [International Centre for Youth Gambling and High-Risk Behaviors](#)
- [YMCA Youth Gambling Program](#)



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## What can schools do to address youth problem gambling?

(Dickson, Derevensky & Gupta, 2002)

- Include gambling awareness information in curricula.
- Provide training for teachers and administrators.
- Train student assistance teams and school mental health personnel to assess for problem gambling and refer students to appropriate treatment resources.
- Review or establish a school policy on gambling and promote enforcement of the policy.
- Implement effective prevention models.

## References

- Dickson, L. M., Derevensky, J.L., & Gupta, R. (2002). The prevention of gambling problems in youth: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Gambling Studies, 18*(2), 97-159.
- Lee, G. P. (2014). Examining potential school contextual influences on gambling among high school youth. *American Journal on Addictions, 23*(5), 510-517.

*This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.*

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