

What we do know is this:

- 60-90 percent of youth engage in gambling, and that youth problem gambling rates are 2-4 times higher than those of adults.
- Surveys of Oregon 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 schools do not talk to their students 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. As an educator you are in a great position to help kids who may be going too far with gambling, provided you recognize that gambling carries risk and approach it accordingly.

What you don't know can hurt....them

It's worth your while as an educator to stay informed about how increasingly easy it is for your students to gamble. This generation is very tech savvy, and gambling marketers are gearing up fast: internet gambling is on the rise and, as if that wasn't enough, it's now possible to gamble via cell phone.

What is problem gambling?

For most students, gambling is just plain fun. If they win – great! If they lose, it is not a major catastrophe. They go on to other, more productive activities. However, for some the attraction to gambling is much stronger. They start to gamble more than they meant to and lose more than they can afford. Their inability to control their behavior is a sign of problem gambling. Severe gambling problems can destroy opportunities for self-development and academic achievement, create conflict with the law, cause depression, and may even lead to suicide. Recognizing early signs of a student gambling problem can make a significant difference in their life.

How many students are problem gamblers?

Oregon's annual statewide student health survey showed that kids are gambling even as early as middle school, and those who gamble are more likely to be involved with other risk behaviors such as fighting, alcohol use, carrying a weapon, and sexual activity.

Informal surveys of Oregon youth have shown that the most common places they gamble are at home, at friends' houses and at school and their games of choice are cards, betting on games of personal skill, betting on sports teams and dice/coin games.

Why some students develop problems

Student gambling problems are known to be affected by:

- Parents who gamble.
- Peers who gamble.
- Family substance abuse problems.
- Family preoccupation with material success.
- Early exposure to gambling.
- Personal history of alcohol or drug abuse.
- Low self esteem.
- ADHD/Hyperactivity.

Warning signs of student gambling problems

- Carries or possesses gambling materials such as dice, playing cards, etc.
- Says gambling is one of the best ways to make easy money.
- Borrows money from friends to pay gambling debts.
- Gambles with money that is supposed to be used for something else such as lunch, bus fare, etc.
- Skips classes or neglects homework.
- Neglects friends.
- Frequent mood swings: usually high when winning and lower when losing.
- Displays large amounts of cash and other material possessions.

What you can do to help

We need to start now to prepare students for what can happen to their lives and their future if they get too involved with gambling. Prevention efforts designed specifically for adolescents are critical. As educators, you can play an important role in the prevention of youth and adult problem gambling. Perhaps the best way to steer your students clear of problems is to do more of what you're already doing. (Keep on being someone who is easy to talk to.)

You can increase your students' awareness of problem gambling. Incorporate gambling issues into lifestyle, health and other curriculum:

- Brainstorm about the negative effects of problem gambling. Ask students to tell you what it can do to someone's self-esteem, relationships or financial situation.
- Ask students to come up with some good alternatives to gambling – fun activities and talents that can be developed.
- Use gambling as a focus for a discussion of addiction (kids are not burned out on this topic, as they may be with discussion of alcohol or drugs) or as a theme for a media literacy, civics, math, social studies or health assignment (curricula and activities are already developed—see the end of this brochure for details on how to access these materials).
- Develop a school gambling policy (e.g. bingo on campus, casino nights, card games at lunch, etc).
- Teach kids about the risks and consequences of gambling; at a minimum convey these two key messages:

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.

If you think you might be gambling too much, or if you are worried about a friend or relative, help is available.

Oregon has a toll-free gambling help line:

877-2-STOP-NOW
(877-278-6766)

¹ This document includes material from the Saskatchewan Health Department.

It's all around us

You've probably seen it at your school (and even if you haven't seen it, it's going on): students playing poker or throwing dice at lunch. It seems like a harmless activity to occupy students' free time. We all know there are worse things they could be doing. And it's no surprise that kids are gambling, given that they are exposed to it virtually every day in one form or another. 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 is the first generation to grow up in a society where gambling is widely accepted, advertising is everywhere and gambling activities are commonplace.

And most important of all...

If you think someone in your class may have a problem, make sure they talk to someone:

- A teacher they trust.
- A parent or a counselor.

Let your students know there are others who have had this problem and that there are people they can talk to who have been through it. There are people just like them who have decided not to let gambling harm their lives.

Your efforts may help to catch a gambling problem before it goes too far. It may even save a life.

Anyone who is concerned about their own or another person's gambling can talk to trained problem gambling counselors through the Oregon Problem Gambling Help Line 877-2-STOP-NOW. It's free, confidential and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Additionally, resources for educators are available from the Oregon Problem Gambling Services Resource Center. Resources include gambling curriculum and handouts, brochures, videos and more. Call 503-945-6187 for more information and/or technical assistance on how to integrate problem gambling information into your classes.

**TOO YOUNG TO GAMBLE?
DON'T BET ON IT.**



**Get help for a
gambling problem**

Treatment is free, confidential and it works.

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