



Talking to Your Kids About Gambling is a Good Bet

Back to school is the right time to discuss problem gambling

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(Green Bay, WI) – For teens, gambling is illegal. Yet the rate of problem gambling among teens and young adults is believed to be twice the rate for adults.

“As we head into another school year, it’s very important for parents to talk about the dangers of gambling with their children,” said Rose Gruber, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling (WCPG). “Young people today are part of the first generation to grow up with widespread gambling as part of everyday life in most areas of the country. They’re constantly exposed to gambling...in the media, through advertising and online.”

Gruber says awareness is an important part of heading off gambling problems before they occur. “A discussion about gambling is important for families with students heading off to college for the first time,” Gruber said. “It’s also important for parents of younger children to talk to them, since the seeds of gambling are often sown at an early age, even in middle school.”

Back to school time is also a busy time for Gruber and her staff as they prepare for another year of presentations to students. Gruber talked at more than 25 schools across Wisconsin during the 2009-2010 school year, reaching an estimated 1,200 students with information about the widespread impact that a gambling addiction can have.

Why do teens and young adults gamble? “People turn to gambling for a variety of reasons,” Gruber said. “There may be a family member that gambles or problems at home. They may do it because of low self-esteem, to win money to escape stress or because of peer pressure.”

What should parents or other family members look for as signs of a gambling problem?

- Does your teen gamble frequently on things like cards, dice, games, sports or online?
- Has gambling become his or her favorite activity?
- Does he or she have trouble concentrating on homework or other activities?
- Has he or she been borrowing or stealing money to gamble?
- Does your teen argue with family or friends about gambling?
- Has your teen lied about how much money was lost while gambling?

Answering yes to a few of these questions may be an indication of a gambling problem.

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“For most people, gambling is something they do for fun,” Gruber said. “For others, including many teens and young adults, gambling becomes a serious problem. The good news is that resources are available for those who are problem or compulsive gamblers.”

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*The **Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling** is funded by a public awareness grant from the State of Wisconsin and additional funding from donors, including Wisconsin Native American Tribes. The Council operates a 24-hour Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5, distributes informational brochures, organizes an annual statewide conference, makes presentations on problem gambling and conducts training sessions for treatment providers interested in the special requirements for working with compulsive gamblers and their families. For more information, visit www.wi-problemgamblers.org. Become a fan of WCPG’s Facebook Fan Page, search for “Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling” when logged into Facebook.*

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLE-5 for confidential help.

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