

Adolescents and Problem Gambling

Gambling today is more available than ever. It is represented through a variety of media platforms as exciting and easy money. However, gambling can lead to serious problems. Adolescents need to know that gambling can easily get out of control and lead to serious losses, not only of money and possessions, but also the loss of trust and respect from family and friends or educational opportunities. Studies show that the earlier a youth engages in risky behaviors, the greater the likelihood those behaviors will become a problem later

Problem Gambling

Problem gambling is the continuation of gambling activities despite negative personal, social or financial consequences. In Oregon, it is estimated 2.2 percent of adolescents 12-17 (5,929) are at risk of developing a problem or have already developed a problem with gambling.¹

Risk of Underage Gambling

Research indicates that gambling activates the brain's reward system in much the same way that a drug does, though in general the perception is that gambling is less harmful than drugs.

In Oregon, 40% (117,420) adolescents between the ages of 12-17 have gambled in the last year on one form of gambling or another.¹

Consequences of underage gambling:

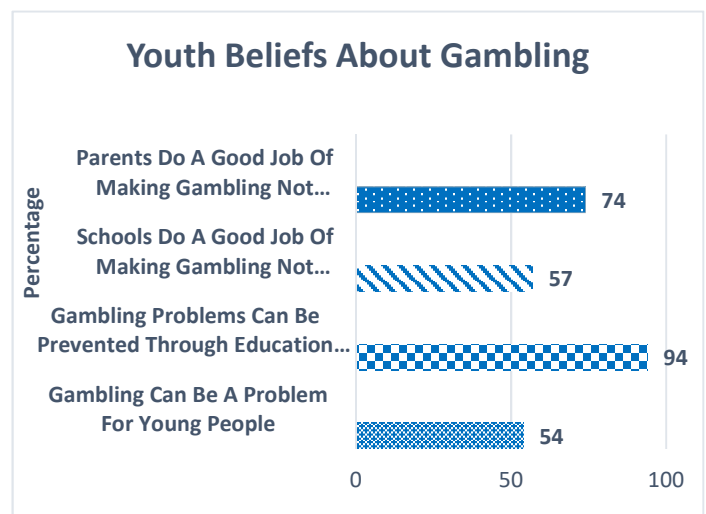
- Increased risk for developing gambling disorder
- Increased risk for delinquency behaviors
- Damaged relationships
- Poor academic performance
- Mental health issues, including depression and anxiety
- Increased risk for substance use and abuse
- Engaging in risk-taking activities such as: behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries or violence, sexual behaviors, or unhealthy diet.

Data tells us that youth gambling accompanies several other risky behaviors. 43% of Oregon 11th graders who reported they engaged in gambling behaviors, reported they were utilizing alcohol as well.²

What are Oregon Adolescents Telling Us?

- 40% of youth indicated that parents were the number one place that they preferred to get information, while 47% reported that their parents had talked to them about gambling. School/teachers were second at 33%, with 42% of the youth indicating that their school/teacher discussed gambling with them.¹
- The most common forms of gambling reported by youth are: internet with no money (15.7%); sports (14.8%); charitable games (13.6%); games of skill (13.1%); and cards (9.1%).¹
- Entertainment/fun was the number one reason youth reported gambling. Though 38% of youth listed "to win money."¹
- Youth whose parents/guardians gamble are more likely to gamble. For example, youth whose parents/guardians gamble on games of skill are 2.2x more likely to gamble on games of skill.

What do Oregon Adolescents Believe? ¹



What are the Warning Signs?

- Asking for or borrowing money or unexplained debt – not having money for lunch consistently.
- Unexplained absence from school or sudden drop in grades.
- Carries or possesses gambling materials, such as dice, playing cards, or other gambling materials.
- Says gambling is one of the best ways to make easy money.
- Neglects family/friends.
- Frequent mood swings - usually high when winning and lower when losing.
- Lies to parents or friends about how they lost money gambling
- Displays large amounts of cash and other material possessions.
- Intense interest in gambling conversations.
- Using gambling “lingo” in his/her conversation (e.g., bookie, loan shark, point spread, exaggerated use of the word “bet”).
- Uses desperate measures to get gambling money, such as stealing from parents or friends, or selling personal belongings.

What Can Parents or Educators Do?

- Start early – have open and honest conversation with youth now about gambling and other risky behaviors.
- Listen – let them know that they can come to you and ask questions about gambling and that you will listen to them.
- Monitor your youth, know where they are, with whom, and what activities are planned.
- Set the example, be a good role model. If engaging in gambling behaviors model responsible gambling behaviors like: set a limit; set a time; and gambling should not interfere with other worthwhile activities.
- Establish rules and enforce them at home regarding gambling behaviors.
- Help youth develop positive coping skills. Gambling for some is a form of escape when life stressors become overwhelming.
- Educate yourself and the youth in your life about the risk of gambling. Schedule an in-service for staff or parent education night.
- Avoid hosting gambling related parties or fundraising events (e.g., casino nights, raffles, 50/50 drawings) at school or other youth serving organizations. If hosting an event, make sure information about problem gambling and where to get help is provided.
- Establish school policies and procedures restricting gambling on campus.
- Integrate problem gambling information into other prevention messaging or curriculums.

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Source:

1. Moore, T (2019), Oregon Adolescent Gambling Prevalence Study
2. Oregon Health Authority – Public Health Division, Oregon Healthy Teens Survey 2015.