

Know! To Change The Game on Youth Gambling

Is your child at-risk for problem gambling? It may sound like a silly question, but in a recent survey, 90% of youth reported that they had gambled in the past year. Yet most parents say they have never talked to their kids on the subject.

Why is that? Likely it's because when many of us think of gambling, we tend to think of slot machines, horse races and lottery tickets, places and things to which our underage youth do not have access to, so we don't think of discussing it with them. That is where we fall short.

According to the problem gambling awareness campaign *Change The Game Ohio*, gambling includes any act that involves risking money or valuables on the outcome of a game or contest that is mostly determined by chance.

We know that many young people spend hours on their phones and computers playing a variety of games in their free time. Many of these games, with bonus points, coins, gems, loot boxes and other rewards, replicate real-life gambling situations. These seemingly harmless games can easily become a habit for children that can then subtly develop into problematic behavior.

In addition to video games and apps, youth gambling can include:

- Card games.
- Scratch-off game tickets.
- Truth-or-dare.
- Internet challenges.
- Fantasy sports.
- Trading card games.
- Role-play strategy games.
- Bets on school sports.
- Family fun center arcades.

Change The Game Ohio reports the highest at-risk population for problem gambling to be young people, ages 18-24. However, gambling among younger teens is also a reality, and parents and educators are encouraged to learn more on the topic and share it with their sons and daughters. The idea is to prevent youth gambling before it becomes a problem.

In fact, 6.5% of 14- to 21-year-olds are at risk. You may also be surprised to know that more than one in 10 youth admit having gambled money or personal items. Teens who gamble are at a greater risk of depression and anxiety issues, damaged relationships, alcohol, illegal drug use, fighting and criminal activity, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts.

Change The Game Ohio offers these ideas on getting the conversation started:

- Explain that gambling results in losses more often than wins. Spending money on things they want is better than losing it all on a bet.
- Make sure they know that underage gambling is illegal.
- Talk to them about the consequences of problem gambling, and that it goes beyond people getting into financial trouble.
- Talk with your child about how they plan to spend money they have from after-school jobs or allowance.
- Establish limits and set controls on devices that regulate game time.
- Ask questions about their experiences with gambling—and listen to their answers.

Our young people are at risk—the earlier they are introduced to gambling, the more likely they are to be problem gamblers as adults. For additional information on reducing the risk of problem gambling, visit [ChangeTheGameOhio.org](https://www.changethegameohio.org) and [download the tools for gambling prevention](#).