

Know! About Youth Gambling

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) and an opportunity to increase public awareness around the issue of problem gambling, as well as advocate the availability of prevention, treatment, and recovery services within the state. One of the resources Ohio has to offer is the [Change the Game campaign](#), aimed at informing parents, teachers, and anyone with young people in their lives about the warning signs of youth gambling.

Is your child at-risk for problem gambling? It may sound like a silly question, but 15.4% of middle and high school students in Ohio reported gambling behavior in the past 12 months according to the 2020-21 [Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey](#) (OHYES.) Yet most parents say they have never talked to their kids about 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, lottery tickets, places, and things to which our underage youth do not have access, so we don't think of discussing it with them. That is where we fall short.

According to *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, tablets, 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, simulate 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.

Ohio for Responsible Gambling 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, according to **OHYES data**, more than 8% of Ohio youth that has gambled admit having hidden their gambling behavior from family or friends. Teens who gamble are at a greater risk of depression and anxiety issues, damaged relationships, alcohol use, illegal drug use, fighting, 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.

Call for Help

The Problem Gambling Helpline is a resource for Ohio residents who are seeking assistance with problem gambling. Ohio's Problem Gambling Helpline can be reached by calling 1-800-589-9966.