

## Adolescents and Gambling-Not a Safe Bet

*If kids aren't doing drugs or binge drinking, what's the big deal with a little poker or sports betting?*

Gambling has become popular among youths, particularly boys. The Iowa Consortium on Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation surveyed nearly 70,000 6th, 8th, and 11th graders across the state of Iowa. They found that gambling or betting is more prevalent among young males than females. In fact, young males were more than twice as likely to have tried gambling or betting than females. It also shows that among 6th, 8th, and 11th graders, the gambling or betting rate was more than 38% among males, while only 14.4% percent of females admitted to gambling.

Adolescent brains, with their preference for activities with high stimulation for low ef-

fort, are easily enticed by gambling. In addition, coping and decision-making skills are not fully developed. Parents and educators who may be well aware of the dangers posed by alco-



hol and drugs, often overlook the risks of gambling.

Experts share that the earlier in life a person begins gambling, the more likely they are to develop a problem later in life. Many problem gamblers say they started at an early age—as young as 10 years old

According to the Substance Abuse Con-

sortium Report there is no apparent connection between adolescent gambling rates and the presence of a casino in the county they live in. This is not surprising because cards, sports betting and betting games like bingo can take place anywhere. They can easily hide their gambling activity from adults, particularly if using computers or smart phones for on-line gambling. The study also found gambling behavior closely linked to an adolescent having tried alcohol, tobacco or some sort of controlled substance.

What does this all mean? It means that parents, educators and other involved adults can no longer turn a blind eye to the rising issue of gambling among youth. As we see adolescents at younger ages gambling, we also see a correlation with other problems such as alcohol abuse (including binge drinking), drug use, (including marijuana), suicidal thoughts and at-



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

tempts, school problems (e.g., lower grades, truancy, behavior issues), violent behavior, risky sexual behavior, family problems, legal and financial problems, and more. It's time to stop taking risks when it comes to our kids. When adolescents gamble, everybody loses.

For more information or statistics on how gambling and other addictions go hand in hand visit <http://www.ncpgambling.org/>

Sources: <http://www.kcrg.com/subject/news/gambling-study-recommends-gambling-prevention-efforts-target-boys-younger-than-8th-grade-level-20140527>

Gupta, R & Derevensky, J. ed. Gambling Problems Theoretical and Applied Perspectives. 2005. Springer + Business Media Inc.

**October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month-Help Make Every Home a Safe Home**

For local help or information, please contact Community and Family Resources at 1-866-801-0085 or [www.cfrhelps.org](http://www.cfrhelps.org).

## Teaching Kids How NOT to Get Hurt by Gambling

The behaviors and attitudes that lead to problem gambling among adults usually develop during childhood. Our Prevention Specialists can teach youth how to think critically about gambling before serious problems develop. We use evidence-based curricula (designed by educators, tested in classrooms, and proven to have positive impacts.) that are designed to be taught in a few weekly classroom sessions. We have programs designed for elementary, middle school and high school aged youth. For more information, contact Community and Family Resources at 515-832-5432, or [seano@cfrhelps.org](mailto:seano@cfrhelps.org).

# Community and Family Resources

**"Community and Family Resources is a pro-active organization dedicated to assisting individuals, families, and communities achieve healthy behavior and lifestyle through advocacy, prevention, and treatment of substance abuse and problem gambling."**

*Since 1968, CFR has a long history of helping people learn healthy behaviors to prevent addictions and*

## Problem Gambling Is Linked to Family Violence

We know that partners of problem gamblers are more likely to become victims of domestic violence. Now a study completed this year by researchers at Melbourne University in Australia shows some new dimensions to the relationship between problem gambling and family violence.

This study screened 120 family members of problem gamblers seeking help in a range of clinical services for both family violence and problem gambling. Over 40 % identified themselves as victims of family violence, while nearly one third admitted to perpetrating family violence. There was significant overlap between the two; one fifth of the individuals were both

victims and perpetrators of violence within their families. Overall, the results showed that over half (52.5%) reported some form of family violence in the past 12 months.

The violence examined in the study not only involved problem gamblers and their partners, it included children, parents, in-laws, and siblings. In some cases problem gamblers themselves were actually the victims of violence, often by parents or parents-in-law who are stepping in to protect another family member. Partners (and ex-partners) of problem gamblers were most likely to be both perpetrators and victims of family violence. The same can be said for parents of problem gamblers. Those

participating in this reciprocal violence were equally likely to be male or female. However, females were more likely to be only victims, and were also more likely to report violence in comparison to males.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 32 of the participants; most reported that gambling generally preceded family violence. The findings suggest that perpetration of family violence was more likely to occur as a reaction to deeply-rooted and accumulated anger and mistrust whereas victimization was an outcome of gambler's anger brought on by immediate gambling losses and frustration.

Although a study of this detail hasn't yet been com-

## Problem Gambling and Drug Use: They're All the Same to the Brain

The similarities between problem gambling and substance abuse are now reflected in the DSM-5, where problem gambling has been reclassified from an impulse control disorder to an addictive disorder. There are important differences between problem gambling and impulse control disorders like pyromania. An impulse-control disorders overwhelms a person with an impulse to act followed by a sense of relief afterwards. In contrast, pathological gamblers find the act of gam-

bling enjoyable and feel distress only after gambling is ended or losses are incurred. Brain imaging studies and neurochemical tests show that gambling activates the reward system in much the same way that a drug does. Pathological gamblers report cravings and highs in response to their stimulus of choice. Neuroscience and genetics research also suggests that problem gambling often runs in families, and often alongside other addictions. Recognition of these findings will help people

with gambling disorder get the treatment and services they need, and others may better understand the challenges that individuals face in overcoming this disorder.

Sources:  
American Psychiatric Association, 2013, <http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx>  
Christine Reilly & Nathan Smith, National Center for Responsible Gaming. Reclassification: From Impulse Control Disorder to Addiction The Evolving Definition of Pathological Gambling in the DSM-5 [www.ncrg.org/sites/default/files/uploads/.../ncrg\\_wpdsm5\\_may2013.pdf](http://www.ncrg.org/sites/default/files/uploads/.../ncrg_wpdsm5_may2013.pdf)

Prevention Department  
500 Fairmeadow Dr.  
Webster City, Iowa 50595

Phone: 515-832-5432  
Fax: 515-832-3221

**We're on the Web!**

**Cfrhelps.org**

*One Life at a Time  
One Day at a Time*

pleted in the U.S., the existing research findings and anecdotal evidence concerning gambling and domestic or family violence suggest that similar patterns can be found in this country.

If you are a victim of domestic violence in need of assistance, please contact one of the following **24-hour Hotlines:**

Domestic/Sexual Abuse-Outreach Center **1-888-356-2006** (Serving most of **North Central Iowa**)

Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence **1-800-382-5603** (Serving Northwest Iowa, including **Calhoun or Pocahontas Counties**)

Assistance for families of problems gambler is also available at **1-800-BETS-OFF** (statewide)

If in immediate danger please call **local law enforcement at 911.**

Sources:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-05/relatives-of-gamblers-suffering-violence/4938030>

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1186%2F2195-3007-3-13#page-1>

