



Problem Gambling & Washington Youth Fact Sheet

Is gambling really a part of teen culture in Washington State?

Yes, it is. Many adults are surprised to learn just how many of the teens they work with have gambled. Because it is so common, it is very important to present the topic in a manner that invites discussion. When introducing the topic of “problem gambling,” it is helpful to tell teens that you are not there to tell them *not* to gamble. Rather, you are there to share information with them about “problem gambling” or gambling addiction.

Why is there urgency to infuse problem gambling awareness into school-based prevention messages for youth now?

- The rate of teens with an established gambling problem or at-risk for developing one is documented to be 8.4% in Washington State. This means that 1 in 12 teens are already betting regularly.
- Nearly one-third of teens surveyed on the most recent Healthy Youth Survey acknowledged that they had gambled in the last 12 months. Significantly, 3% of High School Seniors acknowledged that they are experiencing symptoms of problem gambling (or gambling addiction).
- In general, gambling is considered by teens and parents to be “safe” compared to drugs and alcohol. Gambling can be as addictive as drugs and/or alcohol—and as devastating to personal development.

What does research say about teens and problem gambling?

- A study of teens that gambled and incarcerated criminal adults documented similar personality traits: impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and risk-taking.
Delinquency and gambling: A pilot study of their relationship and common determinants, M. Morgan & M. Lalumiere, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, CA, noted in *Gambling Research Reveals*, Alberta Gaming Research Institute, Vol. 6, #3.
- A Texas study among adolescent criminal offenders found that 12% of males and 8% of females already had gambling problems (*Wager*, Vol. 7, #1).

Why should adults be concerned about teen gambling?

- Teens who gamble have been documented to be more likely to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and illegal drugs.
- Some pathological gamblers have reported that they began gambling at ages 10, 11, and 12, important years for brain development. Gambling can produce addictive neurochemistry that (1) undermines impulse control and (2) feeds sensation-seeking and risk-taking.
- The costs of problem gambling are high: loss of relationships, academic failure, difficulty keeping jobs, debt, criminal activity, incarceration, depression, and even suicide.



Sports Gambling Facts and Statistics

85% of American adults have gambled at least once in their lifetime.

What are the odds:

- Of a college player becoming a pro football player: **3,000 to 1**
- Struck by lightning: **280,000 to 1**
- Winning a Powerball jackpot: **140,000,000 to 1**

Adolescents gamble frequently on sports (Annenberg)

- 26.4% males bet on sports monthly in 2008, 20.7% in 2007
- Male adolescent weekly sports bettors increased from 5% in 2007 to 9.7% in 2008
- Youth have 2 – 3 times higher compulsive gambling rates than adults
- According to an ESPN survey, about 118 million Americans gambled on sports in some manner in 2008.

College athletes gamble on sporting events (NCAA)

- 30% of male athletes bet on sports last year
- 26% of male athletes reported that they started gambling prior to High School, 66% began in High school.
- About 67% of all college students bet on sports.

College students and gambling

- Researchers estimate that 75% of college students gambled during the past year.
- 6% percent of college students in the U.S have a serious gambling problem.
- The most frequently chosen gambling activity for college students is the lottery at 43% followed by 38% playing card games, and 23% at sport betting.

Student Athletes who met at least one criteria for gambling addiction were much more likely to:

- Receive traffic tickets
- Buy on impulse
- Steal
- Have apparent with a gambling problem
- Have 5 or more drinks in one sitting
- Have multiple sex partners
- Engage in risky sexual behaviors
- Have friends who gamble
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Athletes are at high risk for sports gambling

- High levels of energy
- Unreasonable expectations of winning

Signs & Symptoms of a Compulsive Gambler

- Preoccupation with thoughts about gambling
- Asking for larger amounts of money or gambling more frequently
- Personality changes, such as irritability, restlessness and withdrawal
- Alienation from family and friends
- Inability to cut back or stop gambling
- Lying to friends and family about how much you gamble
- Borrowing to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by your gambling
- Thinking about or committing an illegal act to finance your gambling
- Suicidal thoughts

- Competitive personalities
- High intelligence
- Need for action and excitement
- Ability to play through pain and endure great loss
- Perception of social norms and sense of entitlement

Many Athletes appear in the news due to gambling problems

- Gilbert Arenas, Tim Donaghy, Pete Rose
- Charles Barkley, Nikolay Davydenko, John Daly

The 'Final Four' in college basketball is the number one betting event for college students

- Super Bowl Sunday is the biggest betting day of the year in America
- Approximately \$90 million bet in Las Vegas this year
- 1 – 3% of total amount bet

Sports pools in the office often introduce people to sports betting i.e., World Series, Super Bowl, March Madness.

Nearly all U.S colleges and universities have policies on student alcohol use; however, only 22 percent have a formal policy on gambling.