



BUCKS COUNTY GAMBLING/GAMING AWARENESS TOOLKIT

Gambling and/or gaming activities shouldn't always be considered harmless. These activities operate on the same reward pathways and the same neurotransmitters as ATOD addiction. Youth gambling is associated with alcohol and drug use, truancy, low grades, and risk-taking behavior.

What is Gambling?

Gambling is taking part in any game or activity in which you risk money or a valuable object in order to win money. A few examples include:

- Lotteries (Lotto 6/49[®], Lotto Super 7[®])
- Instant lotteries (7 chanceux[®], other scratch cards)
- Bingo
- Betting on billiards or pool
- Card games (poker, blackjack, etc.)
- Private sports betting/sports lotteries (Mise-au-jeu[®])
- Casino games (slot machines, roulette, Keno[®])
- Video lottery terminals
- Internet gambling
- Dice

Games of Chance vs. Games of Skill



Games of chance are games in which the results depend, either partially or totally, on luck. Practice does not increase a person's chances of winning, and a player's knowledge or skill has little or no control over the result. The nature of luck-based games is such that all events are unique and independent. Examples include Bingo, roulette, the lottery and slot machines.



Games of skill are games in which a certain level of knowledge or skill is required; the player can, at least in part, control the result of the game. Practice can make a person a better player. For example, sports are considered games of skill (soccer, golf, billiards, etc.), as well as other games such as chess, some board games and, to a certain extent, some card games.

What is Problem Gambling?

Problem gambling is any gambling, betting or wagering that causes family, financial, legal, emotional or other problems for the gambler, their family or others. Gambling problems can be mild or quite severe and can worsen over time.

Gambling becomes problematic when a person keeps playing despite experiencing negative consequences from their gambling participation. Because they are preoccupied with their gambling activities and are losing control, excessive players will neglect their other responsibilities and activities. They are unable to set or maintain limits related to both time and money.

Why Do Youth Gamble?

- To escape problems
- Loneliness, depression, or boredom
- Peer pressure
- Think it is a quick way to get rich
- To impress others
- To be the center of attention
- Think of it to make friends.
- Winning provides an instant, temporary boost of confidence



Sound familiar? Many of these can also be reasons a young person may use substances.

Warning Signs

- Students miss classes or entire school days with no explanation.
- Grades suddenly drop or assignments aren't being completed.
- Disinterest towards extracurricular activities.
- Behavior becomes more secretive, defensive or aggressive.
- There's an increased interest in money and the value of possessions.
- They speak openly about an interest in gambling or borrowing money.

Gaming vs. Gambling



The shift from gaming habit to gambling problem is subtle. But the risks aren't.

Research suggests there is a clear convergence between gaming and gambling. Additionally, the problems that may develop with both activities also possess similar elements. Whether it be in-game gambling-related activities or actual wagering on eSports competitions, there is a growing need for awareness of the issues associated with video gaming addiction, as well as how to address the problems.

Some signs of an issue may include:

- Preoccupation with video gaming
- Absences from school/work
- Decline in school/work performance
- Lack of interest in non-gaming activities

Youth games, even seemingly harmless candy or pet-centered games, can recreate some of the same emotions and excitement experienced by gamblers. Many of the available apps are marketed toward a young audience (ages 2-17) making them vulnerable to gambling addiction and other risk-taking behavior.

An Example of Gaming Slang



Free-to-Play - games that don't require a purchase to download and play; once downloaded, players are pressured to spend money on upgrade items.



Login Rewards - players are granted a reward upon logging into a game or app for the first time of the day.



Loot Box or Mystery Box - a form of in-game gambling that players can open for a random chance of winning a prize, gain an experience level or other in-game achievement.



Skin - an aesthetic change to an item or player. Rare skins can be obtained by loot boxes, completing certain objectives, or getting high scores in competitive games. Players often use skins to display their rare achievements or high skill level like trophies.

How Games Simulate Gambling:

- Games offering opportunities for login rewards with instant upgrades create the habit of gaming every day.
- Loot boxes and spin-to-win rewards replicate real-life gambling opportunities by building competition among online friends and allowing players to earn fake money or other prizes.
- Innocent-looking games with shiny, little rewards may seem harmless. But they could head to lifelong issues for the young people exposed to them.
- Games build competition among online friends and strangers that drive children and teens to keep playing until they beat more levels or otherwise make progress.
- Games often allow players to earn fake money or other prizes that can be traded for an opportunity of winning more, replicating a real-life gambling opportunity.
- Many mobile games allow children to pay real money for game boosters and tips – making children sacrifice cash for games that will never produce any real value for them in return.
- Games are easily accessible, making it simple for children to get caught up playing and become distracted from their responsibilities, wherever they are – even if they are at school.
- The desire to play their preferred games can make children irritable when they are forced to do other activities, such as join the family for dinner or do homework.
- There are many apps that simulate real gambling scenarios, such as poke games, blackjack and virtual slot machines, which increase the desire of teenagers nearing the age of 18 to play in real life.
- Young children playing free versions of games consider their online success indicative of how they would do in versions where they bet real money.

What Do Bucks County Youth Say?

- Overall, **31.3%** of students in this county engaged in gambling for money or anything of value in their lifetime (compared to 30.4% at the state level).
- **9.3%** of Bucks County 12th grade students reported they gambled in the past 30 days (compared to the state average, 8.0%).
- The most frequently reported form of gambling was “lottery [scratch cards, numbers, etc.]” reported by **16.0%** of students who had gambled in the past 12 months (compared to 18.3% at the state level)
- Types of gambling reported by Bucks County youth (6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade students):
 1. Lottery (scratch cards, numbers, etc.) - **16.0%**
 2. Personal skills games (pool, darts, video games) - **15.6%**
 3. Poker or other card games, dice, etc. - **11.3%**
 4. Sporting events or sports pools - **11.1%**
 5. Bet gambled in some other way - **10.1%**
 6. Online gambling - **3.9%**

What Can You Do At Home?

Children and adolescents are more likely to gamble if they witness adults gambling, and especially if the adults show interest and excitement about gambling. On the other hand, children are put in a better position to judge the potential dangers of gambling if they are taught that gambling is an occasional activity meant for entertainment only, not as a way to make money, and that there are certain risks and negative consequences associated with engaging in gambling activities. Practice what you preach:

- Consider your own participation in lotteries or in-person gambling such as poker games.
- Establish clear rules concerning your child's screen time and exposure to games involving betting.
- Ask your child for more information the next time they want to use your credit card to make a purchase.



Talk to Your Kids

Did you know that children introduced to gambling by age 12 are 4x more likely to develop a gambling problem? It's important to make time to talk with kids about gambling. Here are a few discussion points:

- 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.
- Explain that underage gambling is illegal.
- Talk to them about the consequences of problem gambling, including being sad, having no money to spend, lower grades, and damaged friendships.
- Encourage healthy spending. Talk about how they plan to spend money they have from their after-school or summer job, as well as allowance.
- Ask questions about their experiences with gambling - and listen to their answers.

Check ESRB Ratings

ESRB ratings provide information about what's in a game or app so parents and consumers can make informed choices about which games are right for their family. Ratings have 3 parts:

- Rating Categories (everyone, teen, mature 17+, adults only)
- Content Descriptors (gambling, substances, violence, language)
- Interactive Elements (in-game purchases, users interact)



Set Parental Controls

Setting parental controls on your family's game consoles and other devices will help you manage your children's video game use, even when you're not around. In just a few minutes, you can activate features to:

- Block games by age rating
- Control spending
- Limit time spent
- Restrict communication

Help Manage Time with Gaming Activities



Check wireless router features

See if your router can disable itself during certain times. It can help limit late night gaming sessions.



Set limits

Only give yourself a set amount of video game time per day. Have a parent or friend help keep you accountable.



Explore new interests

Play sports, learn an instrument, read a book. Explore new hobbies can really help keep your mind off gaming.



Have "detox" days

Games can lose their urgency when you just step away for a while. Set a few days aside every week to not play.



Unplug with board games

Go analog with friends! Board game nights are a great alternative to online gaming.

For Educators

Create a safe school environment that can help protect students and prevent gambling behaviors.

Points to include in your school policy:

- No form of gambling will be allowed during lunch or recess.
- No gambling-themed events should be held for student participation.
- No school related gambling fundraisers should involve students: selling raffle tickets, working a casino night, etc.
- Gambling is prohibited at any school sporting events.
- Online gambling sites will be blocked on school servers.
- Have a clear outline of when and where all rules are in effect.
- Have a list of consequences (detention, suspension, parent notification) and how they'll be enforced.

Visit <https://changethegameohio.org/education/education-for-educators/> for more information and resources for educators about policy, warning signs of student gambling, risks, discussion guides and other lesson materials.

Resources

- [Change the Game - Education for Parents](#) - We all have a role to play in preventing problem gambling among young people. It starts with knowing the facts.
- ["Go Away, Monster!"](#) - Gambling Addiction Awareness for Children
- [Talk to Kids \(NYCPG\)](#) - Today, the explosion of internet gambling and gaming opportunities - plus the inescapable advertising and marketing of gaming and gambling everywhere from television to the corner store - relentlessly expose our children to enticing messages of winning, risk-taking and excitement from a very early age.
- [International Center for Responsible Gaming](#) - Young people gamble for some of the same reasons as adults: they want to have fun and win money.
- [Oregon Health Authority](#) - Research shows that parents have the power to make a difference in how kids respond to risky activities like substance use or gambling.
- [24/7 Helpline](#) - Speak with someone who can get you the help you may need. All calls are free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day. Call 1-800-848-1880 or 1-800-GAMBLER.
- [Gamblers Anonymous Meetings](#) - Closed and open meetings are held all over the Southeast region, including some in Bucks County. For more information about a specific meeting, please contact the Gamblers Anonymous Toll-Free Hotline at 1-855-222-5542 (1-855-2-CALL-GA).
- [The Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania, Inc.](#) - Non-profit organization affiliated with the National Council on Problem Gambling which educates and disseminates information on compulsive gambling and to facilitate referrals.
- [Change the Game: A Parent's Guide to Gaming Slang](#) - Gambling in games has a language all its own. Here are some words you need to know. [ParentsGamingGlossary.pdf](#) (changethegame.wpenginepowered.com)
- [Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc.](#) funds school-based youth problem gambling prevention programs available to Bucks County schools free of charge.

Social Media Posts

Please share!

- Problem gambling is defined as “any gambling, betting, or wagering that causes family, financial, legal, emotional, or other problems for the individual, their family, or others. Gambling problems can be mild, or quite severe, and can worsen over time.” If you or someone you know has an issue related to gambling, help is available. Call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit www.pacouncil.com for more information.
- While most who choose to gamble can do so responsibly, research suggests that over 5 million adults in the United States are estimated to be experiencing gambling-related problems. In Pennsylvania, this translates to hundreds of thousands of individuals. As more gambling becomes available and participation increases, it is likely that more people may begin to experience problems. If you or someone you know has an issue related to gambling, help is available. Call 1-800-GAMBLER or visit www.pacouncil.com for more information.
- Parents: did you know that gambling in games has its own language? Check out this Parent’s Guide to Gaming Slang from Change the Game... do any of these terms sound familiar to you? (*link here: <https://changethegame.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ParentsGamingGlossary.pdf>)
- Did you know that children introduced to gambling by age 12 are 4x more likely to develop a gambling problem? And, according to the 2021 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), overall, 31.3% of students in this county engaged in gambling for money or anything of value in their lifetime (compared to 30.4% at the state level).
- According to the American Psychiatric Association, 10–15% of young people surveyed have significant gambling problems; 6% of the teens who have tried gambling have become pathological gamblers. Click the link for some great resources on how to talk with kids about gambling and other helpful information: https://www.bcdac.org/prevention/problem_gambling/youth_problem_gambling/index.php
- Did you know that 96% of adolescents are exposed to gambling ads? Let’s help young people recognize gambling in media messages! Here are some examples of things you should keep an eye out for from Change the Game. (*link here: https://changethegame.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MediaLiteracy_Youth.pdf)

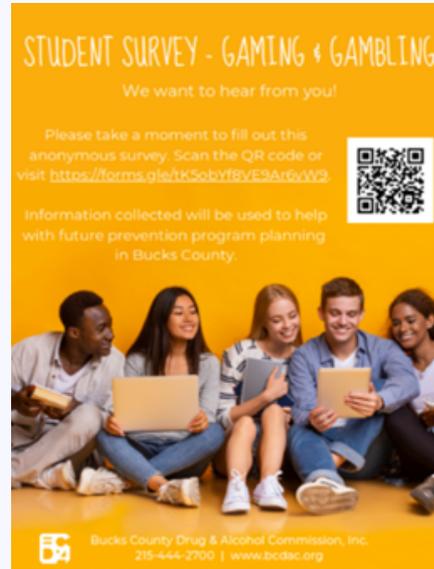


Surveys

Please share!



[Parent/Caregiver Survey](#)



[Youth Survey](#)

We Need Your Help!

- Share this toolkit with other professionals, parents/caregivers and other stakeholders.
- Use the social media posts provided in this toolkit to share information with your followers.
- Share survey links with adults and youth in Bucks County to help us gather important information and inform our future programming.
- Be sure to follow BCDAC, Inc. on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube for more content, resources and events happening in Bucks County.
- Lastly, reach out to Bucks County Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc. if you want to learn more about school-based prevention programs, resources or if you have any questions.



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