

## GAMBLING FAST FACTS

**50%**

of 6th-8th graders are engaged in some form of gambling

**4-8%**

of youth are impacted by problem gambling, compared to just 1% of adults

**13%**

of youth (ages 11-16) have played **gambling-style games** online

**80%**

of high school students report having gambled once in the past year

**10yrs**

The age gambling disorders can begin to develop in children

**4x**

The number of youth with gambling problems has **quadrupled** in just two years

**5%**

of **youth** (ages 12-17) suffer from problem gambling

**VS**

**1%**

of **adults** suffer from problem gambling

### SET THE TONE

Try to avoid challenges such as “I bet you can’t make it down the street in under 30 seconds,” which can normalize gambling behavior. Instead, encourage your child to enjoy activities that are traditionally associated with wagers—such as card games or sports championships—without placing bets.

### FLIP THE SCRIPT

Remind your child that gambling rarely results in winning. Allow them to consider what they can do with the money they save by not gambling.

### STATE THE FACTS

Youth often overestimate the likelihood of winning a bet or a game. Level-setting those odds can help reduce the appeal of gambling. For instance, you can compare the odds of winning the lottery (1 in 292 million) to the odds of being struck by lightning (1 in 3,000).

### EXPLAIN THE SCIENCE

Talk with your child about the dangers of gambling as you would talk to them about the risks of drugs and alcohol. Explain how their underdeveloped brains aren’t yet ready to make fully-informed decisions and are still susceptible to addiction’s most harmful effects.

### PROMOTE HEALTHY ACTIVITIES

As youth get older, they might be better able to identify when gambling is just for fun versus when it becomes a problem. Until then, make sure family fun activities focus on experiences other than betting.

### BE IN THE KNOW

Be aware of the games and apps your child uses. Identify those that mimic gambling behavior. Ask questions and gauge your child’s understanding of their own relationship with gambling.

## THE DANGERS OF YOUTH GAMBLING ADDICTION

A Guide to Discussing Gambling with Your Child



### MASSACHUSETTS PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE:

**CALL:**

800-327-5050

**TEXT:**

GAMB to 800327

**CHAT:**

[gamblinghelpline.ma.org](http://gamblinghelpline.ma.org)

## How can I keep my child safe and healthy?

### Dear Parent,

Every day since your child was born, you've likely asked yourself: how can I keep them safe and healthy?

The reality is that risks are everywhere. They're a part of life. As parents, we can't control every risk our child takes. But we can guide them away from more problematic risk-taking behavior—like alcohol, substance use, vaping, and **gambling**. While drugs and alcohol are a common concern for parents of adolescents, gambling often gets overlooked. *That's totally okay—it's why this toolkit was created.*

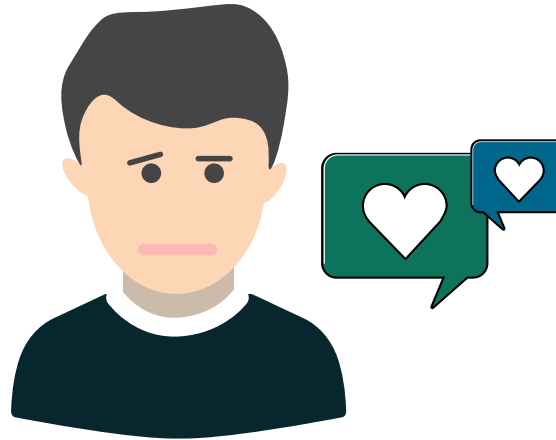
If the enclosed information is new to you, don't worry! It's never too late to have these important conversations with your child. You're taking the right steps by helping them build healthy habits so they can explore risk safely and with confidence.

## GAMBLING:

*When you risk something of value, and you don't know if you will win or lose.*

*Among all addictions, gambling is linked to the highest suicide rate*

*Adolescents who gamble are also more likely to use illegal drugs*



## GAMBLING CAN IMPACT RELATIONSHIPS, FAMILY & EMOTIONS.

### REDUCE THE RISK

There are plenty of ways you can reduce your child's risk of developing problem gambling. To help you get started, we've include some recommended steps below:

#### 01

Reduce your child's exposure to gambling. Since children often mirror what their parents do, consider skipping that next lottery ticket or weekend poker game.

#### 02

Establish clear rules around your child's screen time. This will decrease opportunities for online gambling.

#### 03

If you notice your child playing any gambling-related apps or games, speak up and start a conversation. You can always use the tips included in this toolkit!

#### 04

Keep an eye on your child's spending habits. Get more information the next time they ask for your credit card to make a purchase.

### KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Understanding the warning signs of youth problem gambling can help you recognize it and prevent it from becoming an issue down the line. This is especially important if there is a history of addiction in your family. Warning signs from your child might include:

- Changes in attitude around school (missing classes, not completing assignments, showing less interest in extracurricular activities, and/or getting lower grades)
- Noticeable interest in competition (winning or being right)
- Money allotted for routine expenses (e.g. lunch money) or household cash going missing
- Stashes of money and/or new possessions appearing
- Changes in mood or behavior (aggression, defensiveness, signs of anxiety/depression and/ or secrecy).



Even if your family does not participate in betting or gambling, chances are your child has been exposed to gambling behaviors through media and advertising. Talking with your youth today can help them establish healthy ways of thinking so that these exposures do not lead to problem gambling.