



WHY IS YOUTH GAMBLING A CONCERN?

Youth problem gambling is a growing public health concern. While parents may think gambling is less of a problem than drugs, smoking or drinking, there's still reason to be concerned. Gambling can become an addiction — and is statistically more likely to occur the younger a person first gambles.

Gambling problems have long-term, severe consequences on a teenager's life and on the life of those close to him or her. Some of the adverse effects of a gambling problem can be seen on various levels of individual functioning (cognitive, social and academic) and on both mental and physical health.

Despite the fact that gambling activities are legally restricted to adults in many jurisdictions — and have traditionally been viewed as an adult activity — there is clear evidence that underage youth actively participate in gambling. According to the most recent Minnesota Student Survey completed in 2019, 30 percent of middle school and high schoolers gambled in the last year, seven percent gambled frequently (more than once a week) and half of one percent (2,000 students in Minnesota) indicated signs of gambling disorder.

In addition to anecdotal and empirical evidence of the dangers of youth gambling, there's also a physiological explanation. Recent advancements in brain development research indicate that the frontal lobe — the decision-making part of the brain — is not fully developed until age 25.

There are many overlapping indicators for video gaming disorder and gambling disorder and there is increasing evidence that social casino gaming may cause increased gambling behavior in youth as well as eventual gambling problems.

Thus, youth are less likely to make fully considered decisions about gambling and the risks that they take. This supports the reason why gambling is not allowed until the age of 18 in Minnesota and 21 in many other states.

Youth gambling is also a concern because the lines between “gaming” and “gambling” are becoming increasingly blurred. Problem gambling prevention efforts should really be addressing problem behavior with respect to “gaming” as much as gambling. Video games often have gambling-like features incorporated in them, and there are real opportunities to gamble using features within video games (e.g., skins, or in-game virtual decorative weapons/materials) that meet the definition of gambling in prize, chance and consideration.

There are many overlapping indicators for video gaming disorder and gambling disorder and there is increasing evidence that social casino gaming may cause increased gambling behavior in youth as well as eventual gambling problems. This contention is bolstered by information provided by the U.K. Gaming Commission, which reported that 31 percent of youth age 11 to 16 have paid or used in-game items to open loot boxes while three percent had bet with in-game items. Further, a study (Zendle & Cairns, 2018) also noted that the amount of money spent on loot boxes by those playing video games have been linked to severe gambling problems.



Susan Sheridan Tucker
Executive Director
NPGA

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A Focus on Youth Gambling

As an advocacy organization, creating awareness about gambling disorder and problem gambling is, of course, our mission. A perennial example is our partnership with the Minnesota Lottery as part of a North American-wide campaign to discourage adults from purchasing lottery tickets for those under the age of 18. Studies have shown that the younger one starts gambling, the greater the likelihood they could develop an issue with gambling. This is just one form of gambling that can be directed towards minors, but there are many others.

We are focusing this edition of Northern Light on other aspects relating to youth gambling/gaming. Regrettably, the state of Minnesota does not include gambling prevention in its life skills programming, which includes messaging pertaining to alcohol, drug, tobacco and vaping. This speaks directly to Minnesota's continual separation of gambling addiction from other addictions. This is quite disconcerting, as research shows that gambling is often a co-addiction or can be a "replacement" addiction when someone is in substance abuse treatment. Early exposure to fantasy football and sports betting with friends and family can develop into more serious problems when young adults depart for college or begin to have disposable income. Clearly, the earlier youth are presented with prevention messaging, the more likely they are to proceed with some caution when encountering addictive substances and activities.

This issue also looks at gaming disorder and its convergence with gambling disorder. Unlike gambling, gaming is legal at any age. Our intent is not to vilify gaming; there are many positive aspects to this form of play. However, we need to highlight the potential harms if play is not conducted in moderation and adopted by the player as a means to protect them from their anxieties of the physical world.

Gaming disorder was recently recognized by the World Health Organization. To further solidify the legitimacy of gaming disorder, the International Gambling Counselor Certification Board recently created a certification in gaming disorder, and INTENTA's gaming disorder 15-hour training is the first to be approved.

In time, we'll have greater understanding of the COVID-imposed isolation and its impact on players. Parents and children need information now to help them navigate these challenging waters.

Be well,
Susan Sheridan Tucker

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

We thank all our members, donors, volunteers and affiliates who have contributed to our mission.

Become a member today. Visit www.NorthstarPG.org to join us.



Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to help those affected by problem gambling in Minnesota. We do this by promoting awareness and understanding of the issue via our website, newsletter, community education programs, sponsorship of the Minnesota State Conference on Problem Gambling, and training of professionals in preventing and treating problem gambling.

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THE CONVERGENCE OF GAMING AND GAMBLING

A major concern when it comes to youth addiction to gambling is the convergence of gaming and gambling. Many games now include gambling features and many gambling activities have gaming-like features.

Games that include gambling-like features are most concerning. Unfortunately, these gaming sites are both very accessible and unregulated. They include social casino gambling, which is considered gambling without risking money. However, these sites typically include virtual currency, and thus can be seen as a “training ground” for future gambling with real money when participants are of age.

An example of gambling-like gaming is a video game that features mini-games one can bet on in a simulated casino. There are also many opportunities to participate in social casino games through social media.

Another example of “gambling” is a video game that features loot boxes, where players can spend money for access to

unknown game features. According to Gambling Research Exchange Ontario, free gambling-like games are now more popular than online gambling for money. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the number of people who bet on different outcomes of video games.

Studies show that young adults and adults who are exposed to these types of games may be more likely to develop gambling problems.

Electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are gambling devices that offer a variety of games. They may have the same theme as popular television game shows. EGMs are found at casinos, on cruise boats, at racetracks, at local bars, and even at corner stores. EGMs may have an element of skill or a feature that makes it seem that skill plays a role. Researchers believe that features such as these help to attract young participants and keep them gambling.

Today’s youth are the first generation to grow up with electronic gambling, such

as video poker and video slots. Electronic gambling is considered to be the most addictive type of gambling because games can be played rapidly, there’s easy access to money (through credit cards), the activity takes place in isolation and there is no potential for human intervention to monitor the gambler’s behavior.

Evidence shows that the age group most affected by gaming disorder is adults between the ages of 25-40. However, given that this is a relatively new platform and online access is far more readily available today than just ten years ago, monitoring minors’ activities in gaming and creating appropriate prevention messaging will be important.

Children and teens have little awareness that regularly partaking in these types of activities may lead to problem gambling issues later in life. In fact, most individuals, whether minors or adults, have little awareness that these unregulated sites are, in fact, designed to be more predatory than regulated sites.



World Health Organization

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION NOTES GAMING DISORDER

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). This revision included a statement regarding gaming behavior as follows:

Gaming disorder is defined as a pattern of gaming behavior (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests

and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behavior pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.

The inclusion of gaming disorder in ICD-11 follows the development of

treatment programs for people with health conditions identical to those characteristic of gaming disorder in many parts of the world, and will result in the increased attention of health professionals to the risks of development of this disorder and, accordingly, to relevant prevention and treatment measures.

Note: The WHO’s definition of gaming disorder intentionally omits games that have gambling elements built in.



The Massachusetts Council
ON GAMING AND HEALTH
We Understand the Problem. We Can Help.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Might the Renaming of Massachusetts's Council Be the Way of the Future?

In September, after nearly 40 years, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling (MCCG) changed its name to the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health (MACGH). Northern Light discussed this change and its implications with Marlene Warner, executive director of MAGH.



Marlene Warner

Q: Why was the organization renamed?

A: We started talking about this around four years ago. For starters, the term “compulsive gambling” was antiquated. We also became involved

with GameSense, which meant we were more focused on the full spectrum from prevention to recovery rather than just intervention. We also heard increasingly from people at casinos and on social media, helplines, etc., about the blurring of lines between gaming and gambling. Since iGaming takes place on the casino floor it made sense to talk about “gaming,” which is more of an all-encompassing term. The “health” aspect of our name reflects that we do more than just intervention — we also want to look at the larger public health implications. The intention of the name is to not only expand our mission but also

to designate what we’re truly doing as an organization.

Q: Was there a tipping point in the decision to change the name?

A: It was a gradual thing but in the last two years as we’ve realized the blurred lines between gaming and gambling, so have gaming commissions. Congress has even held hearings on gaming. It became clear to us that this was the next wave and we didn’t want to miss it.

Q: What has the response been to the name change?

A: For the most part, everyone has been incredibly supportive. They thought it was appropriate and future-focused.

Q: Have you made any changes to your training since the name change?

A: The very first thing we did was to work on a certificate program and clinical training program to broaden counselor and clinician knowledge of video gaming in a clinical setting. We want to make sure they’ve been prepared so that when someone presents with a gaming problem, they know how to respond.

Q: How is Massachusetts handling gaming disorder? Are counselors encouraged to take the INTENTA training? (INTENTA is the first approved training provider for the new International Gaming Disorder Certificate

(IGDC) by the International Gambling Counselor Certification Board).

A: The training that we’re putting together is sort of a competitor to INTENTA.

It’s another option that is a little shorter and less expensive. We are collaborating with the Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling and the course is called Foundations in Gaming Disorder. As with INTENTA, it will qualify for international board certification.

Q: Do you plan to measure the impact of the name change, whether through changed attitudes or diminished stigma around gambling disorder?

A: For now, we’re just collecting anecdotal feedback. But a year from now, we’ll want to know we’ve done the right thing. I think we’re gaining a lot of traction. We’re also in the process of putting together a major national study with gambling and gaming stakeholders with major universities. That, alone, has been well received.

Q: Do you think other state councils will make similar name changes?

A: Several fellow state councils have asked us how to do it. Many of us were trained on the idea of calling it “gambling” rather than “gaming” so it takes some fresh thinking. It’s not a change to be done lightly.

Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

Visit www.minnesotaga.com to find open meetings for compulsive gamblers as well as family and friends, or closed meetings for compulsive gamblers and those who think they may have a gambling problem.

RECOVERING VIDEO GAMER ADDICT CREATES SUPPORT COMMUNITY FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PLAYERS



Cam Adair

Cam Adair, a video gamer in recovery, has made his life's purpose to prevent others from reaching the same depths as he did. Cam's life took a dramatic turn at the age of 11 when he began to experience intense bullying, leading him to drop out of high school and escape into gaming. He never graduated, and while all of his friends were off to college, Cam was playing video games up to 16 hours a day. Struggling with depression he reached rock bottom when he wrote a suicide note, and it was this night when he made a commitment to change.

INTENTA

The stated goal of INTENTA is to equip mental health professionals with resources on digital disorders to empower an intentional digital culture. It provides internationally accredited training that covers a comprehensive overview of problem and disordered gaming, allowing mental health professionals to understand the context, dynamics, mechanisms and special issues that present with gaming clients.

According to INTENTA's website, professionals lack the tools and training to effectively screen clients, which greatly increases the risk of misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment. Without training, professionals cannot effectively communicate nor relate to clients who engage primarily in digital spaces.

Distraught family members of loved ones with gaming issues may seek help from mental health professions, who lack the training to assess and counsel families to provide effective interventions. Without comprehensive education, these professionals can cause harm by making ineffective and counterproductive interventions.

Another challenge is the rapid rate of change and evolution in video game technology. INTENTA helps professionals stay current with ever-increasing game innovations and their client's struggles.

After completing the INTENTA training, professionals will:

- Improve quality of care and reduce potential risk of harm for clients
- Understand the psychology of gaming and recent innovation trends
- Have validated screening tools to identify at-risk clients
- Be able to implement practical strategies for prevention, treatment and recovery
- Be a valuable source of knowledge among their colleagues
- Be an internationally recognized specialist in gaming disorder

For more information about INTENTA, visit intenta.digital.

Game Quitters

Game Quitters is the world's largest support community for video game addiction, which currently serves members in 95 countries.

The Game Quitters website (gamequitters.com) provides a wealth of information, including more than 200 videos about video gaming addiction and a list of ideas to replace gaming. The site also provides an addiction test for gamers, lists of resources and support groups, and other information to help those with a video game addiction as well as parents and concerned others.



TIPS FROM CAM ADAIR TO PARENTS

Cam Adair, in recovery from gaming disorder, provides some tips to help prevent gaming from becoming an addiction. He says it's important to focus on maintaining key protective factors in the family, such as having a diversity of hobbies and interests (so gaming doesn't become the only thing they do to fulfill their needs). He also encourages supporting well-being habits, such as sleep hygiene and physical activity, and to be consistent in your boundaries and limits.

As a gamer begins to play more excessively they will do all they can to increase the amount of time they can play. One strategy a gamer will implement is to remove barriers or obstacles that occupy time they *could* be gaming. They will stop doing sports, lose interest in other activities, manipulate your emotions and become the most effective lawyers in town to argue for maximum gaming time.

Stand strong and be firm in the values you hold for your family. It's a lot easier to prevent gaming from becoming a problem than it is to turn the situation around once it's become one.

For additional support and key strategies for both prevention and intervention, refer to the Reclaim Family Program (GameQuitters.com/reclaim/)



NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING PERSPECTIVE ON LOOT BOXES

A feature that has become part of the majority of popular video games threatens to become a gateway to problem gambling: loot boxes. Loot boxes are consumable virtual items in video games that can be redeemed to receive a randomized selection of further virtual items, or loot, ranging from simple customization options for a player’s avatar or character, to game-changing equipment such as weapons or armor.

Loot boxes are extremely profitable for video game companies. Payments are made through micro-transactions that may involve box purchases of 99 cents. However, repeated purchases of loot boxes can quickly escalate into thousands of dollars of purchases over time.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) believes that many games with loot box systems already meet criteria for gambling, as players who make purchases of these boxes don’t know if the item they seek will actually be in the box.

Some loot boxes that have the same or similar characteristics of slot machines may not meet legal definitions of gambling but carry the same risks for addiction.

A legal definition of gambling is not required for a feature like a loot box to cause harm. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and ICD (International Classification of Diseases) clinical criteria for gambling disorder do not require that rewards be “real money” or preclude a diagnosis if the client played with virtual coins or received several free plays before spending excessive amounts of time and money purchasing loot boxes.

Factors common to many loot boxes and slot machines:

- random distribution of prizes
- variable value of the prizes
- visual and sound cues associated with participation and reward trigger urges to play along with increased excitement and faster play

Consequences of gambling problems:

- financial harm
- emotional difficulties
- poor work or school performance
- poor mental and physical health
- higher rates of depression and substance abuse

Strong regulation is important, but it cannot be effective at reducing harm unless

accompanied by equally robust prevention, education, treatment, recovery and research.

NCPG recommends addressing concerns around loot boxes and addiction with a multi-layered approach to users, parents, and communities to ensure an appropriate range of protections is put into place for youth and other vulnerable populations.

Key initiatives should include:

- creating better informed consumers
- preventing gambling-related problems
- encouraging treatment-seeking
- supporting recovery
- increasing research to enable evidence-based solutions

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Why belong to the Alliance?

NPGA is stronger in voice and it affirms the value of our work. Gambling disorder is a real and destructive addiction. Our work is not about prohibition, but to ensure those negatively impacted have available resources for recovery and to minimize the risks for all. Better informed consumers make better choices. More members equal greater credibility with decision makers. Visit our membership page at Northstarp.org/membership.

PLATINUM



Shakopee Mdwakanton Sioux Community



Minnesota Indian Gaming Association

GOLD



Canterbury Park



Treasure Island Casino



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Minnesota State Lottery

SILVER



Project Turnabout

Warning Signs of Youth Gambling



- Easy access to gambling activities
- Exposure to gambling at a young age
- Gambling among peers
- Parental or sibling gambling problems
- Frequency of activity
- School problems (decrease in interest and grades; truancy)
- Impulsivity, sensation seeking
- Lying or being more secretive
- Increased anxiety, mood swings, irritability
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Changes in routine (comes home later, asks to stay over at friends more frequently, etc.)
- Changes in friends, more secrecy about friendships
- Changes in personality

Source: YouthGambling.com

Factors that Can Protect Against Youth Gambling



- Strong self-esteem
- School connectedness
- Strong problem-solving skills
- Strong social skills
- Positive family cohesion and bonding
- Connectedness to the community (availability of resources)
- Significant relationship with an adult

Source: YouthGambling.com

Research and Clinical Experience with Adolescent Problem Gamblers



- Are more likely to be boys
- Are generally greater risk-takers
- Often show signs of lower self-esteem
- Tend to report higher rates of depression
- Often gamble to escape problems
- Are more likely to also develop substance addictions
- Seem to be more excitable and outgoing
- Are more anxious and less self-disciplined
- Are at greater risk for suicide ideation and suicide attempts
- Often replace their regular friends with gambling acquaintances
- Have poor coping skills
- Report beginning gambling at an early age (approximately age 10)
- Often recall an early big win
- Report more daily hassles and major traumatic life events
- Often have parents, relatives or friends who gamble
- Are more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior and criminal activities to acquire money
- Develop problems with family and friends
- Move quickly from just gambling with friends and family to problem gambling
- Show decreased academic performance

Source: YouthGambling.com

NPGA Participates in Annual Lottery Holiday Giving Campaign

December is a time when many cultures engage in gift giving. Recognizing that some people may be tempted to consider giving scratch tickets to young people as gifts, NPGA and the Minnesota Lottery supported the Holiday Lottery Campaign, which warns of the

potential harm if lottery tickets are gifted to minors.

A scratch-off ticket may provide momentary excitement, but underage recipients don't have the cognitive development to discern the potential risks of gambling. This is why tickets sales are limited to adults. When a trusted adult provides a ticket to a minor, it normalizes the activity as an acceptable practice.



GIFT RESPONSIBLY. Lottery tickets are not child's play.



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www.NorthstarPG.org

NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE
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**Changing Problem Gambling Behavior through:
AWARENESS • EDUCATION • RESEARCH • ADVOCACY**

