

## RECENT TRENDS IN GAMBLING /GAMING CONVERGENCE

With a new generation raised on electronic devices and the explosion of apps on smart phones, the gambling industry seized upon this new market, producing tens of thousands of gambling sites. In Minnesota, where online gambling is not legal, players may not be aware that they are being drawn to offshore sites that are unregulated and extremely predatory.

### **SOCIAL CASINO GAMES**

There's also been a rise of online social casino games that players participate in for free. However, as a player becomes more immersed, real money must be spent for more time or for virtual prizes to keep playing. Since these games are unregulated, there are examples of vulnerable people falling prey to the lures to pay for longer play. More research needs to be conducted about the impact of these games, but currently early data indicates:

- Some evidence that players are migrating from social casino games to physical world gambling.
- Simulated gambling may make gambling appear more positive, safe, normal and socially accepted, and may even increase a young adult's confidence in gambling due to the relative ease of winning.
- Increased prevalence of gaming and gambling-related problems, spending money on free-to-play games and exhibiting symptoms of problematic gaming. Those who spend money on in-game purchases have reported problem gambling severity, increased impulsivity and reward sensitivity.

### **VIDEO GAMING AND THE RISE OF LOOT BOXES**

Video gaming, separate from social casino games, has evolved into a multibillion-dollar industry. These games offer players opportunities to explore new worlds, compete with others, build skills and develop social online networks.

Some video games, however, have embedded gambling elements, often referred to as "loot boxes." A player pays for a box, not knowing what's inside. As these games are not regulated, the player has no idea what the odds are of acquiring the "skin" or attribute they hope to receive through the purchase. Not surprisingly, the most cherished attributes are most difficult to obtain. Without the odds being clearly articulated (as they are in regulated casino and lottery



games), the player may decide to “chase” the prize. This can lead to problem gambling. Additionally, third party sites are linked to some games in which players can gamble with their “skins” as some are considered highly valuable to impress or enable one to advance in the game.

The concern lies with the rise of embedded gambling elements within games for young children and the greater exposure to normalizing gambling the greater the risk that they will likely gamble in the physical world, may have normalized attitudes towards gambling, and may have an increased risk for gaming- and/or gambling related harms.

Without regulations there is greater opportunity for game designers to create algorithms that are not consumer friendly and could potentially contribute to problem gambling behavior.

It's important to note here that there are many similarities between gambling and gaming disorders as well as distinct differences. One can have one addiction without the other. Gaming disorder refers only to players who engage with games that do not have gambling elements built in. If you have a child who seems to be exhibiting signs of spending too much time gaming or believes that their online world is more enjoyable than the physical world, you may wish to visit [Game Quitters](#).