

Preventing Teenage Excessive Gambling

A WINNING STRATEGY



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A game should remain a game



International Centre for
Youth Gambling Problems
and High-Risk Behaviors
WWW.YOUTHGAMBLING.COM

Why This Brochure?

Parents play a critical role in preventing problem gambling among teenagers.

As parents, you are well placed to know your teenager's interests, needs and fears. And, contrary to popular belief, your choices, values and behaviour do have a significant influence on your teenager. This closeness puts you in a key position to help them develop a **healthy and responsible** attitude towards gambling activities. Recent research* results show that 95% of Canadian parents believe they should be the ones principally responsible for preventing teen gambling. As well, a majority of parents think they are the first ones their teen would turn to if they were facing gambling problems.

We hope that this brochure will serve as a useful guide to help you reduce the risks of problem gambling for your teenager.

The information in these pages may also be helpful to anyone who wants to help a teenager or a relative experiencing gambling problems.

Don't forget: to be successful, you need to make sure your messages are consistent with your own behaviour.

* DECODE, *Parents as Partners. Summary of Topline Quantitative National Findings, 2009.*

Did You Know That...

- Approximately 36% of high school students in Québec say they have participated in a gambling activity at least once in the previous year*.
- The average Québec high school student is introduced to gambling around the age of 11 years*.
- Among high school students, all things considered, more boys (41%) than girls (31%) participate in gambling activities*.
- Over 20% of high school students have received lottery tickets as gifts, despite the law that prohibits the sale of lottery products to minors (under the age of 18), in effect since February 1, 2000*.
- Approximately 30% of high school students gamble occasionally (less than once a week) and 6% are habitual gamblers (on a weekly or daily basis)*.
- Card games including poker, scratch tickets, betting on games of skill and sports are among the most popular forms of gambling among high schools students*.
- Compared to other teen issues such as excessive use of video games, smoking, alcohol and drug use, drinking and driving, gambling is not viewed as a high-risk behaviour by Québec parents**.
- Almost 75% of Québec's parents believe their teenagers have never gambled**.

* INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC, *Enquête québécoise sur le tabac, l'alcool, la drogue et le jeu chez les élèves du secondaire, 2006.*

** DECODE, *Parents as Partners. Summary of Topline Quantitative National Findings, 2009.*

Excessive Gambling Among Teenagers

- Even though legalized forms of gambling are restricted to persons over 18 years of age, they are still very much present in teenagers' daily lives. Furthermore, teens are exposed to advertising that promotes the idea that gambling is a fun activity. As such, many adults view gambling as a harmless and socially acceptable form of entertainment.
- Adolescence is a developmental phase of life when youngsters seek autonomy, independence and social acceptance. Teens also want to reinforce their self-esteem. Participating in gambling activities may make them feel that they are fulfilling some of these needs. In fact, several studies show a link between low self-esteem, the search for social acceptance and a higher risk of developing a gambling problem.
- Teenagers have been found to be at higher risk than adults for developing gambling problems. Results of the Québec study* show that between 2% and 6% of Québec high school students already exhibit signs of problem gambling. These rates are considerably higher than those of adults.
- Research** has also established a link between the age of initiation to gambling and the risk of developing a gambling problem: the earlier someone begins to play such games, the higher the risk of developing a gambling problem. It is therefore very important to prevent or delay teen participation in gambling.

* INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC, *Enquête québécoise sur le tabac, l'alcool, la drogue et le jeu chez les élèves du secondaire*, 2006.

** WINTERS, K. C. and al. « A prospective study of youth gambling behaviors », *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 16, 3-9, 2002.

Is Your Teen at Risk?

The following signs can help you evaluate your teenager's level of risk for developing a gambling problem:

- Expresses a new and persistent interest in gambling;
- Has friends who gamble regularly (e.g., poker);
- Behaves impulsively;
- Experiences problems in school;
- Exhibits low self-esteem and shows a great need for social acceptance (wants to be popular);
- Has trouble managing stress and resolving problems;
- Is obsessed with the results of professional sports;
- Spends a lot of unsupervised time at the computer;
- Family members frequently participate in gambling activities.

The following are some of the serious consequences of problem gambling, for both players and their close friends and family:

- Mental health problems (anxiety, depression, etc.);
- Lower academic results;
- Disruption or breakdown of social and family relationships;
- Serious financial problems (loans, theft and debt);
- Participation in illegal activities, including drug use.



Winning Messages

for Your Teenager



If your teenager has already begun to gamble and plays regularly, encourage him/her to behave responsibly so as to minimize the negative impact associated with excessive gambling.

- There is no way to improve the odds of winning at casino games, video lottery terminals, lotteries, sports betting and many card games, online gambling and so forth. They are all games of chance and it is impossible to control outcomes.
- There is a greater likelihood of losing money than of winning - that's just how gambling works. The probability of winning is very low compared to that of losing. For example, the odds of winning the Lotto 6/49[©] jackpot are about 1 in 14,000,000.
- If you choose to play, it is important to set a limit on the money that will be spent well before wagers begin. Only gamble what you can afford to lose, and then stop. Chasing losses gets people into deeper trouble.
- When the temptation to gamble becomes difficult to resist, you must confide in someone and ask for help.
- To avoid using gambling as an escape mechanism, it is important to learn how to manage stressful situations; for example, find a hobby, get involved in sports, or confide in someone you trust.

Problem gambling can have serious consequences. The risks and consequences are similar to those of alcohol and drug addiction.

While it is best not to play cards for money with your children, there are ways to do so that will minimize risks and provide opportunities to teach them that the enjoyment factor does not come from walking away with someone else's loss, but rather from the activity itself. For example, you could share evenly among the players the money intended for this activity. The money won must be returned at the end of the game. This can also be accomplished with bingo tokens that are returned to their container at the end of the game. The idea is to make sure that there was no personal risk of financial loss or gain.

New Trends in Gambling: What You Need to Know

About online gambling

Some players may:

- Lose track of the time spent playing and amounts they have bet;
- Have a false sense of control, particularly due to practice sites where they play without betting money. It has been shown that the odds of winning on these practice sites are higher than on real online gambling sites. Many players erroneously believe that they can learn to play better and therefore improve their chances of winning;
- Be tempted to frequently visit these unrestricted websites because they are accessible around-the-clock.

About poker

Some players may believe that:

- Their participation will raise their status to that of national and international sports players and celebrities who play such games. They are ready to invest time and money to reach that goal;
- This activity depends almost exclusively on skill, with chance only playing a secondary role. In reality, it's exactly the opposite;
- Poker is a sport.

About sports betting

Some players may:

- Wrongly believe that familiarizing themselves with the athletes and the teams will result in a sure thing and make chances of losing minimal;
- Place bets with bookies who offer credit. Such credit is always subject to high interest rates that the gambler will be forced to pay;
- Not understand that betting on sports can result in serious financial problems due to frequent betting of high amounts. To reimburse gambling losses, some players go into debt or turn to illegal activities.

Recommandations for Preventing Problem Gambling Among Teenagers

How to start this conversation with your teen

- Choose a time when your teenager seems open to discussing the issue, for example:
 - Following the airing of an advertisement or program discussing gambling;
 - If he/she raises the subject;
 - When he/she tells you about a friend's winnings or losses (in sports betting, for example);
 - When he/she makes comments such as: "Imagine how popular I would be if I won that";
 - When a member of your family raises the issue of gambling;
 - When a close family member talks about their gambling losses or winnings.
- Ask questions. Try to find out what your teenager thinks about gambling, how he/she sees it, what he/she finds attractive or unattractive about it, and what leaves him/her indifferent. From his/her reaction, you will be in a better position to assess how to best approach the subject.
- Share your own concerns and opinions about teenage gambling (games are not for minors and there are risks involved). Let your teenager express his/her opinions, but be sure to clearly convey your own convictions and expectations. If you know someone who has an addiction of any type (a friend, a close relation), this would be a good opportunity to discuss that with your teenager.



Where to Find Help

If you would like information about your gambling habits or those of your child or if you would like to locate resources that would be helpful to teenagers experiencing gambling problems (or their loved ones), contact the **Gambling: help and referral** hotline.

1-866-SOS-JEUX (767-5389) (everywhere in Québec)
514 527-0140 (Greater Montréal area)

www.jeu-aiderreference.qc.ca/www/homepage_en.asp

This anonymous bilingual help hotline is strictly confidential and available free of charge 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The purpose of this service is to lend an attentive ear and provide useful information about curbing gambling addiction and the resources available in the province of Québec.

The following websites may help you in your prevention and awareness efforts:

www.youthgambling.com

misesurtoi.ca/en/

www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.php

www.responsiblegambling.org/en/index.cfm

www.ncpgambling.org

www.ccsa.ca/eng/priorities/gambling

www.centredollardcormier.qc.ca (available in French only)

www.maisonjeanlapointe.com (available in French only)

www.toxquebec.com (available in French only)

www.legrandchemin.qc.ca (available in French only)

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