



A Parent's Guide to Youth Problem Gambling: What You Need to Know

This guide is brought to you through a partnership between the Carmel Central School District, the Prevention Council of Putnam, and the Carmel Communities That Care Coalition, united by a shared mission: to educate and empower parents and caregivers with accurate, practical information to help keep children safe and healthy.

What Is Gambling?

Gambling is risking something of value on an outcome you can't control, hoping to gain something in return. This includes activities like sports betting, fantasy contests, in-game purchases or "loot boxes," casino-style games on apps, and informal bets between peers. Many youth are exposed to gambling-like features through everyday games or online platforms.

Why Gambling Is Risky for Children & Teens

- Early initiation increases long-term risk. Earlier exposure greatly increases the chance of developing gambling problems later.
- Youth are heavily exposed to highly accessible gambling messages and online "gaming-gambling hybrids," which can blur the line between play and betting.
- Families may underestimate risk: NYCPG notes that communities often lack awareness about how gambling impacts youth and families, and many do not recognize early warning signs.

Connections to Other Risky Behaviors

Youth who gamble are at higher risk for substance use, mental health concerns, and problems at school and home. Gambling-related issues commonly co-occur with substance use disorders and mental health conditions, making early identification essential.

Warning Signs & Symptoms

Behavioral changes

- Withdrawal from family or activities
- Preoccupation with gaming or gambling-like content
- Increased secrecy about online behavior
- Irritability, anxiety, or defensiveness
- Problems at school, including missed assignments or declining performance

Financial indicators

- Missing cash or valuables
- Youth "losing" money meant for regular expenses
- Requests for money without clear explanation

Tips for Parents & Caregivers

- **Talk early and often.** Youth whose caregivers discuss gambling risks are significantly less likely to develop gambling problems. Start conversations even in elementary school and continue through adolescence.
- **Set clear boundaries** around screen time, in-app purchases, and access to money. Review games or apps your child uses and watch for features that mimic gambling.
- **Model healthy behavior.** Children whose parents gamble are at greater risk of gambling themselves. Consider avoiding lottery tickets as gifts or casual betting around youth.
- **Recognize that gambling can affect the whole family.** NYCPG's Family Toolkit notes that financial strain, secrecy, emotional distress, and relationship conflict are common impacts for families of youth who gamble.
- **Seek help early.** Gambling problems are treatable, and support is available. Resources are below

Resources

New York Council on Problem Gambling (NYCPG)

- Provides education, awareness, and prevention tools, and resources.
- Learn how to recognize warning signs and access community support.

Mid-Hudson Regional Problem Gambling Resource Center (PGRC)

(Serving Putnam, Dutchess, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Ulster, Sullivan) offers:

- Free, confidential help for youth and families
- Referrals to trained treatment providers
- Voluntary Self-Exclusion support
- Financial counseling resources

NYS OASAS (Office of Addiction Services and Supports)

- Provides referrals to outpatient and inpatient gambling treatment programs
- **24/7 HOPEline:** 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369) or text **HOPENY (467369)**

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)

- Provides guidance on co-occurring gambling and mental health/substance use disorders
- Supports early identification and integrated treatment for youth and families

Sources: 1. New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports 2. New York Council on Problem Gambling 3. Mid-Hudson Regional Problem Gambling Resource Center 4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration