Know Dice:
Gambling Awareness for Parents

BC Problem Gambling Help Line
1.888.795.6111 (24 hrs)
Dear Parents,

Thank you for taking the time to read Know Dice: Gambling Awareness for Parents. This booklet contains information on the risks associated with gambling and ways to speak to your child about this issue. As the promotion of gambling becomes more prevalent on television and elsewhere, children need to be properly informed of the potential risks of gambling.

Research shows that parents play a vital role in helping to reduce the risk of problem gambling among youth. While your child may not be gambling, they are likely to be exposed to it. Many children have gambled by the time they are 13 years old. Research shows that adult problem gamblers began gambling as early as age 10. It is never too soon to start talking about this issue with your child.

After reviewing this booklet, if you have questions or would like more information, please visit our website at www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca or ask to speak to a Prevention Specialist in your area by calling the BC Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-888-795-6111 (24hrs).

You can learn about and arrange a free education presentation for any adult, youth, or community group or Parent Advisory Council by calling the Helpline number above.

Your feedback about this booklet is important to us. After reviewing the information, please take a minute to complete the feedback form located on the last page. We believe that you will find this information valuable.

The BC Responsible and Problem Gambling Program
What is Gambling?

Gambling is any activity involving the betting or risking of money or valuables (sports equipment, iPods, music, games, etc.) on an activity of chance, where money or other valuables may be won or lost. **Children often refer to gambling as betting.**

Did you know...

- 58% of grade five students in Delaware gambled in the past year. — US study conducted in 2004
- Different in Canada? Nope. Two studies, one in Alberta and one in Quebec, found that most adult problem gamblers began gambling, on average, at the **age of 10.** In BC, the average age to start gambling is 13.
- 67% of Canadian youth report that their parents are buying lottery or instant win tickets for them to play.
- 56% of Canadian parents rarely/never discuss gambling related issues with their child.
- Canadian youth who report that their parents have gambled in the past year show a significantly higher participation in various gambling activities than youth who report that their parents have not gambled in the past 12 months.
- The legal gambling age in British Columbia is 19.


The good news...

Parents are the number one resource that youth say they would turn to if they ever experienced any problems as a result of gambling.

It is important to talk to your kids about gambling.

The earlier children start to gamble, the more at risk they are of developing a problem.
Healthy Activities
While some may argue that any activity can become problematic, most would agree that the following are healthy activities for children: playing soccer or other sports, board games with dice, reading books, playing cards or playing chess. These activities teach physical and mental skill and are good choices for your children.

Caution
You may be surprised that video games are not included in the healthy activities. While video games can be harmless fun for children, caution is recommended. Between TV, computers, internet and video games, many children are now spending most of their leisure time in front of screens and not enough time in physical activities. Children are now spending an average of 57 hours per week in front of some kind of electronic media screen. Likewise, now that video games are available online, it is really important to monitor the sites your child visits. Watch for gambling site pop ups; even the free “.net” sites can become a problem. On the following pages, learn about the links between online games and online gambling, as well as computer tips for parents.

Know Better: Test Your Knowledge
Listed below are some activities that young people like to participate in or try. Test your knowledge! In the box beside each activity, put an H if you think it is a Healthy Activity for your child to try/do, a C for Caution if you think caution should be used for this activity or a D for Dangerous and not an activity children should try. Answers are on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Betting on Sports</td>
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<td>Playing Video Games</td>
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<td>Playing Soccer or Other Sports</td>
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Betting on Sports
Children and youth will bet on anything — personal games, video games, etc. — but one of the most common forms of informal betting youth do is on sports. Many youth believe that if they know the athletes and teams well enough, they can predict a “sure win.” While we know this isn’t true — all games still involve an element of chance — many youth don’t understand that betting on sports can result in serious problems.

Giving your children scratch’n’win or lottery tickets, or playing cards for money is taking a risk with your child’s future. Most parents don’t realize that these “informal betting games” are still gambling. They don’t think to discuss the risks involved in gambling in the same way they would drugs and/or alcohol, because it simply isn’t on their minds. In some cases, parents even participate with their children. Think twice before allowing your child to participate in gambling. Gambling at an early age increases the risk of developing a problem with gambling as an adult.

Too much of a good thing is not necessarily a good thing! These “harmless” behaviours can become problems.
Talking to Your Child About Gambling

Ask questions and listen for their attitudes around gambling.

Does your child know what gambling is? Are they “betting” at school or with their friends? Ask questions first and see what they think about gambling before offering your own opinion. This could be a good opportunity to find out what they know and dispel any misconceptions they have. An attitude that shows a young person is thinking of gambling as fun and harmless, or as a way to make money is a red flag that they have some distorted ideas about gambling. Talk about the difference between skill-building games where practice pays off (playing sports or chess) and gambling, where some skill may/may not play a role but the outcome is ultimately determined by chance.

Find the right time to have the conversation.

Look for a time to bring up the topic naturally. Children are quick to spot a lecture coming and may react negatively to this approach. Bring the topic up when a form of gambling appears (i.e. selling 50/50 tickets to raise funds for sports) or when an announcement about the current lottery winner is broadcast. Context is the key to starting a valuable conversation.

Be specific and concrete.

When you talk about gambling, make sure your child understands it does not just involve games in a casino. When you discuss gambling, give specific examples such as betting on sports, playing poker or cards for money or possessions, or scratch and win tickets. These are the types of gambling in which children are most likely to be involved. There are also many arcade-type games that simulate gambling, by awarding children tickets for prizes. This can be a good opportunity to start a discussion with your child.

Don’t tell them, show them.

You as parent or guardian are an important role model for your child. Children are quick to spot discrepancies between what you say and what you do. Demonstrate your values by the way you live. Convey to your child the role (or absence) of gambling in your own life. Let them know that if you gamble, it is from a conscious, informed position. Share the responsible guidelines you use when you gamble, such as setting a time or money limit. If you choose to gamble in your home, think about the potential impact on your child.

Remember, actions speak louder than words. Make sure your own behaviour is consistent with what you say to your child!
Be clear about your own values.
Discuss what your family and friends think about gambling and the way your family chooses to participate (or not) in gambling. Let your child know that gambling isn’t a way to make easy money. If you like to play cards or other games with your child, don’t play for money. Teach them that the fun from playing games is from the activity itself, not from walking away with someone else’s losses.

Be careful about the language you choose to use.
Avoid sweeping statements or threats. Whenever possible avoid the word “don’t.” Research indicates that youth do not respond positively to this message. Instead give them information about odds, randomness, the consequences of developing a problem. Provide information on decision-making and ways to make responsible choices with their peers; this may include education on ways to gamble responsibly when they are close to reaching the legal age to do so (19+).

For more information, visit
www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca

Ways to Connect to Your Child:

- Try to eat dinner together, at least three times per week.
- Engage regularly in fun activities together.
- Stay connected: take some time to talk about your child’s day - their interests, friends, and activities.
- Try to focus on the positive behaviours your child exhibits.
Online Gambling
With computer games now accessible online, many children are inadvertently being exposed to online gambling through pop-ups advertising “free” sites. Many children (and parents) believe that “gambling” on free “.net” sites is harmless fun. The truth is, these sites often lead young people to gamble on pay sites. Research suggests that 13% of youth that gamble online started playing on free sites. Whether gambling for credits or gambling for money, gambling online is never safe for children. Monitor the internet sites that your child visits and limit the time spent on the computer. Some other suggestions for monitoring computer use are listed on the following page.

Healthy Computer Tips for Children

- Do not leave your computer unattended when you are logged in.
- Create separate profiles and passwords for everyone who uses a shared computer.
- Limit how long your child spends on the computer or playing video games.
- Break up screen time during the day; this includes internet, video games and TV. Encourage daily physical activity.
- Keep computers in a central location, so you can monitor the sites your child visits and the amount of time spent on the Internet. Do not put a computer in your child’s room.
- Don’t share your credit card or bank account details with your child and ensure credit/debit cards remain in your possession at all times.
- Set parental controls on your shared computers. Consider putting a control on your computer to avoid sites of concern, such as BetStopper.

Visit GameSense.ca to download BetStopper, free software that blocks children’s access to gambling content on the Internet.
Common Myths Kids Believe About Gambling

“I’m feeling lucky.”
Gambling is affected by chance; you can’t predict the outcome with certainty, no matter what you think, feel, or believe. You need to use common sense, otherwise you may keep playing when you should have stopped.

“Practice Makes Perfect.”
This is only true for activities that are based on skill — like baseball, soccer, or school work. Gambling is random and even highly-practiced gamblers can’t ensure they will win. No matter how much you play, you cannot control gambling outcomes.

“So Close.”
Have you ever almost won something? Did it make you want to do it again? Almost winning in gambling is not a sign that you are about to win. Each game is random and unrelated to the one before or after.

“I can outsmart the game.”
This kind of thinking can lead to major problems. You may have won before and now think it will happen again. However, gambling games are independent events and there is no connection to past wins. Always remember, gambling is a chance-based event.

“If I keep playing, I gotta win.”
You can’t beat mathematics. The more you gamble, the more you may lose in the long run, no matter how skilled you think you are or how great your “system” is. Each play is an independent event.
Signs of Youth Problem Gambling

While your child might not be gambling now, it is still important to be aware of potential signs of problem gambling among youth. The following is a list of possible warning signs of youth problem gambling. Many of these signs can be consistent with normal developmental behaviour or can be signs of other concerns such as bullying. If you notice one or more of these signs, it can be an opportunity to start a conversation with your child.

Caution: just because your child displays one or more of these signs, it does not necessarily mean they have a problem with gambling.

• Prefers gambling to other activities.
• Boasts about winning and/or talks about gambling often.
• Refuses to explain behaviour or lies about it.
• Has frequent emotional highs and lows (mood swings).
• Seeks to gamble with friends and/or parents.
• Shows an interest in parent’s or sibling’s gambling activities.
• Enjoys watching gambling on TV (such as Texas Hold’em).
• Possesses cards, lottery tickets, sports betting sheets, IOU’s, etc.
• Is a high frequency video game player, especially enjoying computer/video simulated gambling-type games.
• Carries unusually large amounts of cash and/or is frequently asking to borrow money.
• Asks parents to place bets for them or wants to pick 6/49 numbers.
• Seems to acquire and/or lose possessions without a reasonable explanation.
• Has attempted to access your money without permission.

If you are concerned about your child’s or your own gambling, please call the BC Problem Gambling Help Line at 1-888-795-6111.

Adapted in part from McGill University, Saskatchewan Healthline, and www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca
Want More Information?

Resources for Parents
- BC Responsible & Problem Gambling Program
  www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
  www.afm.mb.ca/Learn More/gambling.htm
- Responsible Gambling Council
  www.responsiblegambling.org
- Nova Scotia Office of Health and Promotion
  http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictions/gambling/
- International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviour
  www.youthgambling.org
- Centre for Addictions and Mental Health
  http://www.camh.net/About_Addiction_Mental_Health/AMH101/top_searched_prob_gambling.html

Resources for Children
- Know Dice (BC)
  www.knowdice.ca
- International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviour
  www.youthgambling.org
- Lucky Day
  www.luckyday.ca
- Friends4Friends (Responsible Gambling Council)
  www.friends4friends.ca
Know Dice: Feedback Form

Your feedback on this booklet is important to us. Please complete this form and return it to the address on the back page of this booklet. Thank you!

1. What grade is your child in?
   - Grade 1 — 4
   - Grade 5
   - Grade 6
   - Grade 7

2. Please check the appropriate box in response to the following questions, using the following key:

   1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Undecided   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree

   a. This booklet was useful to me as a parent/guardian.

   b. I know more about youth gambling than I knew before reading this booklet.

   c. I know how to get help if I want to talk to someone about my child’s (or my own) gambling.

   d. After reading this booklet, I will talk to my child about the risks involved in gambling.

   e. I think this booklet is a good way to get information to parents.

3. Additional Comments:
Contact Information

BC Responsible and Problem Gambling Program
If you would like more information or would like to mail your feedback form to our program, please contact:
Help is available. 
All day. Every day.

BC Problem Gambling Help Line  
1.888.795.6111 (24 hrs)

The Problem Gambling Help Line and counselling services are offered free of charge. Funding is provided by the Province of British Columbia.  
For more information please visit: www.bcresponsiblegambling.ca