

Supporting the Whole Child: Connecting Brain Health, Systems, and Practice

Catch It Early: Preventing and Addressing Youth Gambling Behaviors

May 13th, 2026
Session #3



What This Series Is

- An ongoing, twice-monthly learning series
- Grounded in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework
- Interactive and case-based (not just presentations)
- Designed for multiple disciplines and perspectives
- Focused on real-world practice and collaboration

A space to learn, share, and problem-solve together in support of the whole child



Ken C. Winters, PhD

Oregon Research Institute (MN location)

Senior Scientist



Jerry Bauerkemper, BS, CCGC
**Iowa Gamblers Assistance
Program**

Health Consultant



Today's Session

- This session teaches professionals how to **recognize** early signs and risk factors associated with youth problem gambling and **identify and respond** when faced with a youth who may have an issue with gambling.
- WSCC component: Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services



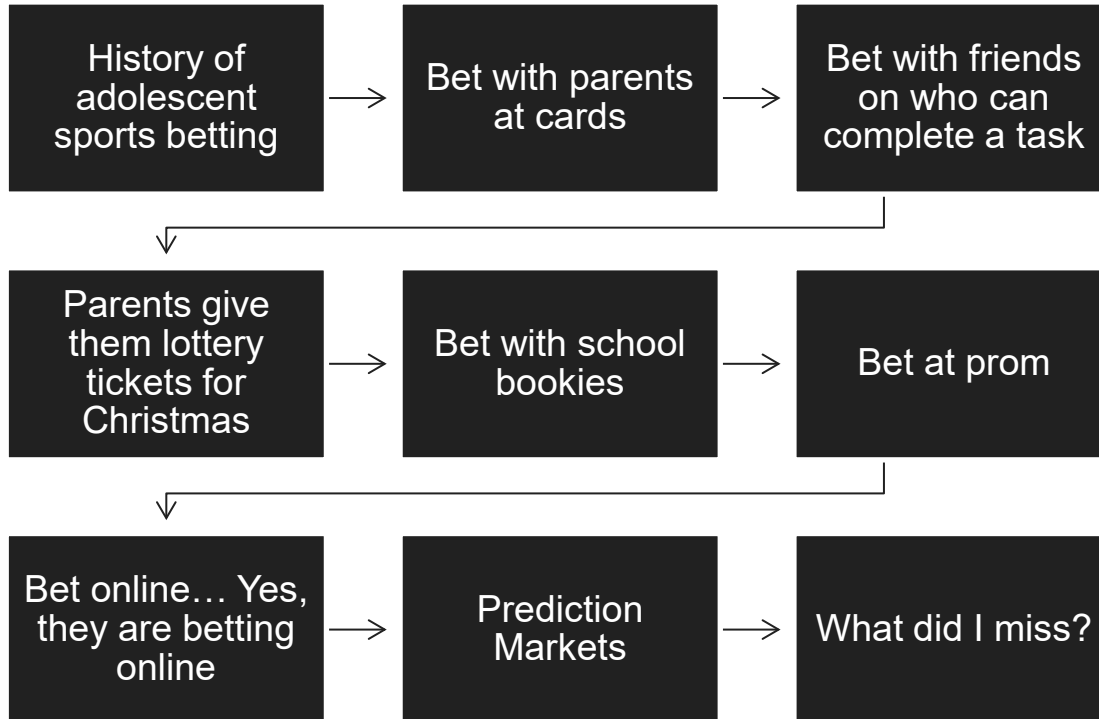
Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize early signs and risk factors associated with youth gambling behaviors
2. Describe practical strategies for initiating conversations with youth about gambling and related risks
3. Apply interdisciplinary approaches to the implementation of prevention and early intervention for youth gambling in school and community settings



The Ways Adolescent Betting are Changing



This is What Researchers Found in 2006 20 Years Ago!

- The average child's first gamble at age 12
- Adolescent internet gambling is emerging as a particular concern due to its solitary nature
- Gambling offers youth:
 - Social activity (how is a solitary activity social?)
 - A coping mechanism
 - Emotional focus coping mechanism (many gamblers also exhibit signs of ADHD)

Source: Mary K Wilber BA, Mark Potenza MD; PhD

October 2006



Adolescent and Young Adult Gambling

Questions:

- If 10.3% of youth have gambled online how is this happening?
- Don't we have safeguards against underage gambling?
- Who monitors age requirements for gambling online?
- Can we stop underage gambling online?

17.9% of youth under the age of 18 have gambled in the last 12 months

159.6 million youth under age 18 have gambled on a commercial site in the past 12 months

10.3% of youth under the age of 18 have gambled online in the past 12 months

Online sports gambling is the second most prevalent form of gambling in the last 12 months

Source: NCPG 2025



What Does Age of Onset Tell Us About Gambling Issues?



Children introduced to “harmless betting” (gambling) by age 12 are four(4) times more likely to engage in problem gambling behaviors later (in life)



More than 2/3 of all adult gamblers report that exposure to gambling during adolescence was a key contributing factor to their current gambling



Adolescents whose parents gambled had significantly more positive attitudes toward gambling than non-gambling parents



The underdeveloped logic center of the brain isn't wired yet to weigh risk and make healthy choices



Youth are Sports Betting

“A teenager’s brain doesn’t have impulse control. It doesn’t have the ability to recover from losses quickly”.



The perspective from a teenager's brain: “I want fun. I want money. I want excitement. I want things that my friends have. I want to prove that I’m super cool to my friends.”

“Teens and young adults who gamble also often inaccurately conflate success in gambling with skill”.

Tim Fong, MD, UCLA gambling treatment USA article 2025



Which are Common Signs of Youth Gambling Issues?

1. Dropping grades (poor academic achievement)
2. Loss of outside interests
3. Criminal behaviors
4. Co-occurring substance use
5. Items lost or newly acquired
6. Relationship with a bookie
7. Changes in social group/relationships
8. Excessive talk of sports or sports related activities



Case Discussion: 20-year-old male. Which are signs of a possible problem with sports betting?

Features of His Sports Betting Behavior

1. Participates in an NFL betting club with a small group of friends; began at age 17.
2. Commits about \$500 per season, with potential winnings of up to \$5,000.
3. Places additional bets through DraftKings with assistance from an older friend.
4. During the NFL season, spends a portion of his free time “researching” games, at times prioritizing this over time with his girlfriend.
5. Reports no interest in betting on other sports.
6. States, “I will never bet more than I can afford to lose.”
7. Does not report net gambling winnings to the IRS.

Issues Related to His Girlfriend and Gambling

1. Frequently complains to his girlfriend that his home state does not permit legal sports betting.
2. Does not disclose details about his wins and losses.
3. When asked by others, indicates he is “not sure” how she would feel if she knew the extent of his betting.



Case Discussion (cont.): 20-year-old male

1. What early risk factors for a possible gambling problem that are present in this case?
2. What role do peer influences (e.g., betting club, older friend) play in maintaining or escalating the behavior?
3. How would you assess whether his gambling is recreational or at a risky level?



Case Discussion: 20-year-old male. Which are signs of a possible problem with sports betting?

Features of His Sports Betting Behavior

1. Participates in an NFL betting club with a small group of friends; began at age 17.
2. Commits about \$500 per season, with potential winnings of up to \$5,000.
3. Places additional bets through DraftKings with assistance from an older friend.
4. During the NFL season, spends a portion of his free time “researching” games, at times prioritizing this over time with his girlfriend.
5. Reports no interest in betting on other sports.
6. States, “I will never bet more than I can afford to lose.”
7. Does not report net gambling winnings to the IRS.

Issues Related to His Girlfriend and Gambling

1. Frequently complains to his girlfriend that his home state does not permit legal sports betting.
2. Does not disclose details about his wins and losses.
3. When asked by others, indicates he is “not sure” how she would feel if she knew the extent of his betting.



Screening Youth for a Possible Gambling Problem

- Best to start with a definition of gambling and followed by a brief discussion
- Then continue with a standardized, problem-based screening tool. Here are two valid screening tools suitable for youth:
 - Lie/Bet (2 items)
 - Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) (3 items)



Suggested Screening Process

1. For the purpose of the next questions, “gambling” means buying lottery tickets, gambling at a casino, playing cards or dice for money, betting on sports games, betting on e-sports, playing slot machines, video poker or other video gambling, gambling on the internet, betting on horses or dogs, or playing bingo or pull tabs.

During the past 12 months have you gambled 5 or more times?

Yes No



Suggested Screening Process (cont.)

2. If Yes, continue with..

What is your favorite gambling activity? _____

What are good things about gambling? Why do you like to place bets?

What are the not so good things about gambling? What is the down side?

3. Administer either the *Lie/Bet* or the *BBGS*



Screening

Lie/Bet Questionnaire

- 2 items
- Download here:
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HS/D/Problem-Gambling/Documents/Lie-Bet%20Questionnaire.pdf>

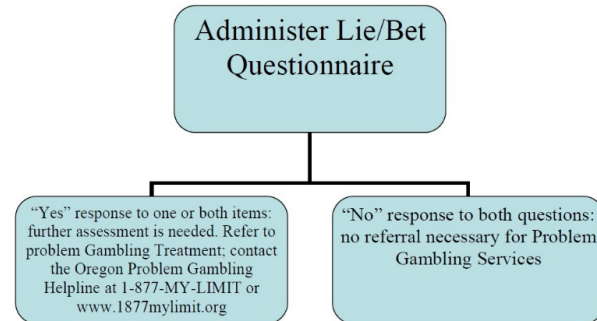
Lie/Bet Questionnaire

The Lie/Bet Questionnaire¹ is a two question screening tool for pathological gambling. The two questions were selected from the DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling because they were identified as the best predictors of pathological gambling.

The Lie/Bet Questionnaire is useful in determining if a longer screening tool or further assessment is appropriate.

Lie/Bet Questionnaire:

1. Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?
2. Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?



National Problem Gambling Helpline
1-800-MY-RESET

¹ Johnson, E.E., Hammer, R., Nora, R.M., Tan, B., Eistenstein, N., & Englehart, C. (1988). The lie/bet questionnaire for screening pathological gamblers. Psychological Reports, 80, 83-88.



Screening

Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) Questionnaire

- 3 items
- Download here:
<https://www.divisiononaddiction.org/outreach-resources/gdsd/toolkit/bbgs/>

Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) Questionnaire

To screen for potential gambling-related problems, please complete the following questions.¹

1. During the past 12 months, have you become restless, irritable or anxious when trying to stop/cut down on gambling?
 Yes
 No
2. During the past 12 months, have you tried to keep your family or friends from knowing how much you gambled?
 Yes
 No
3. During the past 12 months did you have such financial trouble as a result of your gambling that you had to get help with living expenses from family, friends or welfare?
 Yes
 No

A "yes" answer to any of the questions means the person is at risk for developing a gambling problem.

National Problem Gambling Helpline
1-800-MY-RESET (1-800-697-3738)

Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline
1-800-327-5050

Help is available 24/7 and is 100% confidential

For more information, visit:

- www.divisiononaddiction.org
- <https://www.divisiononaddiction.org/outreach-resources/your-first-step-to-change/>



Youth Gambling Resources

- Kansas Coalition on Problem Gambling
 - <https://ksgamblinghelp.com/>
- National Problem Gambling Helpline (1-800-MY-RESET)
 - <https://www.ncpgambling.org/help-treatment/>
- National Council on Problem Gambling
 - <https://www.ncpgambling.org/>
- International Center on Responsible Gaming
 - <https://www.icrg.org/>
- International Centre for Youth Gambling
 - <https://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/Gambling2/index.php>



Motivational Interviewing Resources

- HealtHeKnowledge MI course (UCLA):
<https://www.healthknowledge.org/course/index.php?categoryid=79>
- MI Tips for Health Professionals (The National Council for Wellbeing):
<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MI-Tips-for-Providers.pdf>
- Webinar: Brief Intervention for Adolescents Part I: BNI Using MI Strategies (NORC): <https://www.sbirteducation.com/adolescents/4-part-webinar-series/bi-part-1>
- MI Guidance Documents: <https://motivationalinterviewing.org/mi-guidance-documents>



Today's Ripple



- Youth is a high-risk developmental period for gambling involvement and, for some, the emergence of gambling problems.
- Addressing early signs of gambling problems in youth is a public health priority.
- Apply best practices when screening and counseling youth about gambling-related issues.



Upcoming Session

What Happens Next? Supporting Kids After Trauma from Initial Report to Care

May 28th, 2026
12 PM CT



Thank you!

