Be Aware

- A Florida study found that the average age of initiation for teen gamblers is 12.5 years.
- A recent study at Harvard University found that 10-17% of teenagers have a gambling problem—nearly three times the rate of adults.
- The Harvard study also found that at least 78 percent of Massachusetts teens have placed a bet by age 18.
- Teen athletes are particularly at risk for addiction to sports betting, either on-line or through a bookie.
- Approximately 77,000 Massachusetts teens have experienced a gambling problem.
- Teen problem gamblers have higher instances of other risky behaviors like alcohol, drug abuse and even suicide.

Be Resourceful

Below are some organizations that offer information and help about problem gambling.

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems
www.youthgambling.com

Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling
www.masscompulsivegambling.org

ProbablyNot.net
www.probablynot.net

Youthbet.net
www.youthbet.net

North American Training Institute
www.nati.org

Gamblers Anonymous
www.gamblersanonymous.org

Hope and Help for Problem Gamblers
www.npgaw.org

Your First Step to Change
www.basisonline.org

Back to School
A Parent’s Guide to Teen Gambling

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www.mafamily.org
**Be Prepared**

Know the facts about teen gambling.

From the increasing number of local gambling venues like slot machines and video poker to the explosion of gambling websites on the Internet, teens don’t have to go far to find a place to gamble. Although state and federal laws seek to prohibit teen gambling, various studies have found that:

- Massachusetts teens successfully purchased Keno tickets in convenience stores 66 percent of the time.
- Thousands of teens are ejected from casinos every year; some of them are arrested.
- One in 10 teens report that they gamble on-line at least once a month.
- Many of the video games popular with teenagers can now be played on-line for money.

**Be Proactive**

Be alert for warning signs and ask the right questions.

Experts have identified common signs of problem gambling in teenagers.

- Frequent borrowing of money and inability to repay
- Carrying excessive and unexplained amounts of cash
- Money or valuables missing from their rooms or their homes
- Frequent, unexplained absences from home
- School-related problems like a drop in grades or missing classes

Gambling is a “slippery slope” addiction that can snowball quickly. Parents should be prepared to talk their teenagers as soon as they suspect there may be a problem. Ask your teen about their gambling activities.

- Have you ever gambled on-line or with friends?
- Have you ever borrowed money to gamble?
- Do you find it hard to stop gambling if you’ve lost money?
- Does gambling help you forget about your problems?
- Do you feel upset or guilty when you lose money gambling?
- Do you sometimes think that having a “big win” could solve all of your problems?

**Be Engaged**

Parents and educators are the best protection.

There are many steps parents, educators and teenagers can take to prevent the spread of compulsive and problem gambling in their homes and schools.

- Teenagers model their own behavior—including gambling—on the behavior of the adults they trust and respect.
- Talk to teenagers about the risks and consequences of gambling.
- Include gambling when discussing addictive behaviors like tobacco, drug and alcohol use.
- Invite groups like Gamblers Anonymous and The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling to speak at school assemblies and PTA meetings.