

APPENDIX C

Cultural Shifts in Gambling and the Impact on Children

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A recent change in New York State law has legalized sports betting on internet platforms. The change is yet another opportunity for children to learn gambling behaviors from sponsors intent on expanding their consumer base.

The advertising and marketing of gambling from television to the local convenience store adds to the endless gaming opportunities children are exposed to. Children's game sites entice them with messages of winning, risk taking, and excitement from a very early age. With seductive "prizes" and "secret boxes" available for purchase on game sites, the line between gaming and gambling is blurred. A child may be playing on their phone, tablet, or gaming system just for fun or they could also be gambling with in-game items or real money.

Even the innocent act of providing a child with a scratch off card for their birthday carries with it a message of normalization and encouragement that may eventually place that child at risk. Then, "a dollar and a dream" can quickly turn into debt and a nightmare.

Problem gambling can start at an early age. The New York Council for Problem Gambling reports 39.5% of youth ages 12-17 have gambled in the past year and 30% of these youth report they began at age 10 or younger. Young people who become problem gamblers also have higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, violent and criminal acts, mental illness and school and family problems. Gambling behaviors often co-occur with other childhood indicators of mental health concerns. School mental health teams will benefit from an increased awareness of this behavior as shifts in cultural norms bring children into the culture of gambling.

Below is a helpful resource and two simple screening tools that will help identify the at risk child.

The International Center for Responsible Gaming provides information and screenings for adolescent gambling. Here are two resources:

- ***Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the Brief Adolescent Gambling Screen (BAGS)*** (Stinchfield, R. 2017) describes the development of the BAGS screening and includes the 3 questions asked in the screening.
- ***South Oaks Gambling Screen: Revised For Adolescents (SOGS-RA)*** is published by South Oaks Foundation, Inc., part of Northwell Health. A PDF of the revised screening questions and scoring instructions is provided.