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Info at a glance!

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Gambling with Delaware's Kids

A recent study, *Gambling with Delaware's Kids,* reported that approximately 12% of the state's eighth grade students gambled within the past month and nearly 20% of eleventh grade students gambled within the past year. More than 6753 public grade eight students and 4880 public grade eleven students completed the statewide *Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Abuse among Delaware Students* survey in 2002 where gambling questions were added to the existing anonymous questionnaire. The study was conducted by the Center for Drug and Alcohol Studies at the University of Delaware.

While the report did not show any significant difference in ethnicity, it did, however, confirm a gender disparity. In grade 8, approximately 43% of males gambled in the past year compared to only 12% of females. For grade 11 students, the study found that only 36% of males never gambled whereas the results jump to 75% for females. Among grade 8 students, the survey also found that 9% had gambled on the internet (lifetime), while lottery and sports betting were the most popular form of gambling with approximately 23% of youth having wagered on these types of activities within the past year. In grade 11, sports betting was the most common form of wagering with 21% of students reporting doing so over the last year, followed by lottery and card playing, both at 19%.

The study concluded that those students who gambled were also much more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and use illegal drugs according to the 2002 data. Results show that grade 8 students who gambled were 50% more likely to drink alcohol and 3 times more likely to use marijuana. Grade 11 students were twice as likely to use illegal drugs and binge drink.

Of significance in terms of the community impact of gambling were results indicating that youth who gambled were more likely to be involved in criminal activity and delinquency. For example, grade 8 and grade 11 students were respectively 3 and 4 times more likely to be in trouble with the police if they gambled. Students in both grades were also 3 times more likely to be involved in a gang fight and 3 times more likely to steal or shop lift if they had gambled.

This study confirms that adolescent gambling participation in Delaware is consistent with other studies - youth today are gambling at alarming rates. Even more alarming are studies that indicate the prevalence of problem gambling among teens is higher than that of adults. There remains an urgent need to protect youth from exposure to gambling products and venues given their especially high vulnerability of developing a problem and the serious risk of devastating consequences. In jurisdictions where youth gambling is prohibited, legislative statutes must be enforced.

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