

Youth & Young Adult Gambling: What You Need to Know



For parents, coaches, teachers, and trusted adults

WHY IT MATTERS

Gambling looks different today. With **sports betting, apps, and online games**, it's easier than ever for youth and young adults to access and engage in gambling. Some video games include loot boxes, skins betting, or other chance-based features that can blur the line between gaming and gambling. **In Virginia, nearly 1 in 5 people contacting the problem gambling helpline for support are age 24 or younger.** Early exposure to gambling can increase the risk of financial, emotional, and behavioral harms later in life.

1 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Talking a lot about betting, odds, or "winning big"
- Using apps, games, or websites that involve chance or money
- Being secretive about phone or online activity
- Borrowing money or missing money/items
- Mood changes tied to wins/losses
- Losing interest in school, sports, or friends

2 HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

Keep it open, calm, and judgment-free.

Try:

"I've been hearing more about sports betting- what do you see or hear about it?"

"Do people your age ever bet or use apps like that?"

"What do you think about the risks?"

Do:

- Listen more than you talk
- Stay curious, not critical
- Keep the conversation ongoing

3 WHAT TO SAY

- Gambling is designed so the house wins over time
- It's easy to lose more than you expect
- Apps and games can make gambling feel like skill- but chance plays a big role
- It can become hard to stop, especially for young people

4 HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Set clear expectations about gambling
- Talk openly about money, risk, and peer pressure
- Know what apps/games they're using
- Encourage positive activities and connections
- Model healthy attitudes about gambling

NEED SUPPORT OR GUIDANCE? WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Virginia Problem Gambling Helpline

Call, text, or chat: 1-888-532-3500

24/7 • Free • Confidential

www.VCPG.net

The helpline isn't just for someone with a problem - it's also for caregivers looking for guidance and support.

Early, open conversations can make a real difference.

Virginia Council on Problem Gambling