

**Subject:** Press Release - Problem Gambling Awareness Week March 6-12, 2011

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**For Immediate Release**

## **What's the big deal? Teens and problem gambling**

From Oregon Problem Gambling Community Resource Guide 2010

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/gambling/2010/opg2010guide.pdf>

Most young people don't consider themselves "gamblers." Yet most of today's teens have been gambling for years; not the way adults gamble – at bingo halls, bars or racetracks – but through casual betting with friends or family.

This is why Oregon has designated the week of March 6-12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 as Problem Gambling Awareness Week to raise awareness of the signs of problem gambling. The Adolescent Health Section of the Oregon Public Health Association is particularly concerned about the rate of gambling among Oregon teens.

Gambling and problem gambling among young people is an important and growing issue in Oregon. In 2007 a statewide prevalence study on youth and gambling revealed the following:

- Six in 10 Oregon adolescents (63 percent) have gambled, 46 percent gambled in the past year and 3 percent gamble weekly or more.
- 1.3 percent of Oregon youth are problem gamblers; 4.6 percent are at-risk gamblers. That means there are between 1,100 and 6,300 adolescents with severe gambling-related difficulties.
- Preferred games in order: free Internet gambling-type games, cards (poker), sports bets, games of personal skill.
- Adolescents in families with parents who gamble are twice as likely to be an at-risk gambler and four times as likely to be a problem gambler.
- Adolescent problem gamblers are significantly more likely to have used alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the past year; they are also more likely to have skipped school, been hurt by and to have deliberately hurt someone else, been cautioned by the police, arrested and been to court in the past year.
- High proportions of parents (regardless of whether they gamble) have inaccurate beliefs about gambling, such as thinking that gambling is harmless, and that youth who gamble are unlikely to have problems in school; they also believe that youth gambling is not associated with alcohol or drug use.

For most, gambling is just for fun. It's a way of making the game more challenging, more exciting. But for some, gambling becomes a serious problem. Problem gambling is any gambling behavior that has a bad effect on your life or the lives of people close to you – parents, brothers and sisters, your friends.

Signs that gambling may be a problem are if you, or someone you are concerned about:

- Spend more time or money gambling than intended;
- Go back another day to try to win back losses;
- Feel bad about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble;
- Tell others you've been winning money from betting when you really haven't;
- Want to stop betting money, or gambling, but don't think you can;
- Hide signs of betting or gambling from your parents, friends or others;
- Are being criticized for your gambling or told you have a gambling problem;
- Argue about money and gambling;
- Skip school or work to gamble;
- Borrow gambling money from someone and don't pay them back.

Anyone who gambles can develop a gambling problem. If you begin at a young age and if gambling is a frequent activity in your home or among your friends, you are at greater risk for developing a problem. You may not experience any problems at first, but problems may develop later on.

If you are worried that you or someone you know may have problems related to gambling, call the Oregon Gambling Helpline at 1-877-MYLIMIT or go to [www.1877mylimit.org](http://www.1877mylimit.org). You will be able to talk to someone who can answer your questions and help you decide if you need further counseling.