

Reducing the Odds:

Strategies for Engaging Adolescents in Prevention

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Student Assistance Services

What is Student Assistance Services?

Student Assistance Services (SAS) Corporation is a nonprofit organization that provides prevention, education, and intervention services to support students, families, and schools. They offer programs related to mental health, substance abuse prevention, crisis intervention, and social-emotional learning. SAS often works with schools and communities to provide counseling, training, and resources aimed at promoting student well-being and success.

John Tessitore

JCK Foundation

WHO WE ARE

Through educational programming, research, and advocacy, the JCK Foundation promotes mental wellness in schools, businesses and communities by opening up conversations, sharing hopeful stories of mental health resilience, and connecting people to mental health resources.



Learning Objectives

- Explain the relationship between youth gambling and mental health, including how stigma reduction, lived experience, and psychoeducation strengthen prevention efforts.
- Identify and apply prevention strategies to correct misconceptions, increase perceived risks, and leverage major sports events to enhance youth engagement.

From Connection to Collaboration

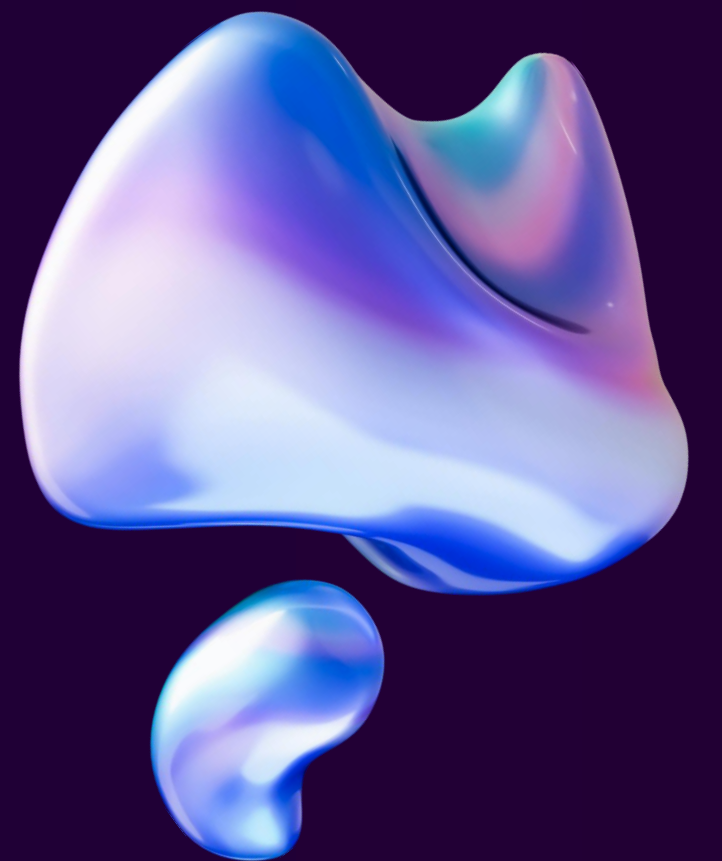


WELLNESS WINS

Gambling &
Mental Health



**WHEN YOU HEAR THE TERM GAMBLING,
WHAT COMES TO MIND?**



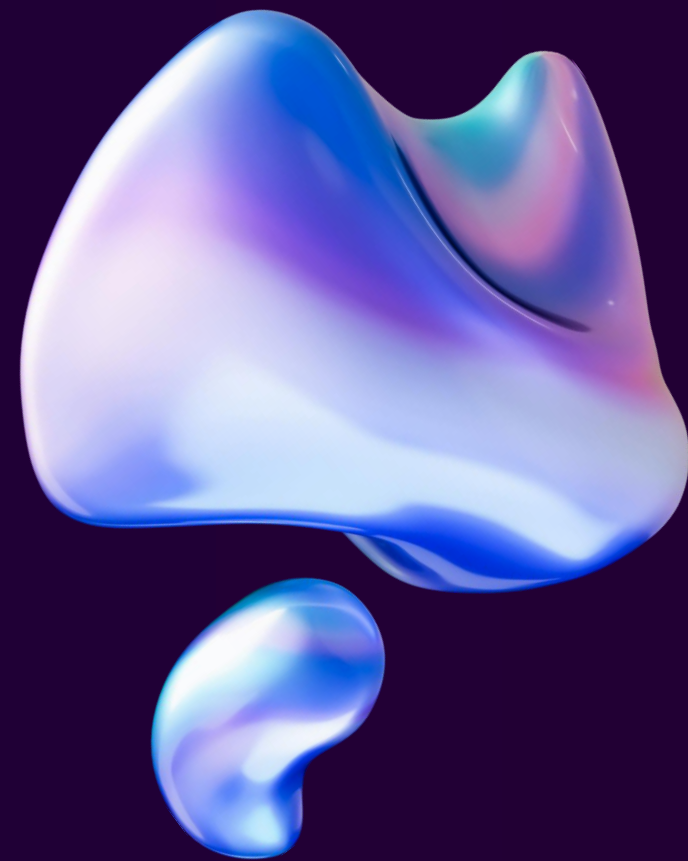
GAMBLING AND MENTAL HEALTH

96% of people who struggle with a gambling disorder also have a mental health diagnosis (Sohn 2023)

Also gambling can negatively impact mental health by impacting sleep, increasing stress and causing anxious and depressive symptoms

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

JOHN'S STORY



PHASES OF GAMBLING

The Winning Phase

- Looking for action
- Thrilling
- Thinks it is exciting
- Free time spent gambling
- Rationalizes Losses as Bad luck

The Losing Phase

- Loses pile up
- Borrow Money/Use Credit
- Lie
- Increase bets
- Low Self Esteem
- Not doing work
- Issues with Family
- Avoid People

The Desperation Phase

- Becomes an Obsession
- Gambler is in a panic
- Do anything to get money
- Loss of Sleep
- School Failure
- Hopelessness
- Thoughts of suicide
- Lie
- cheat
- Steal
- Depression
- Anxiety

(Too Good For Drugs Curriculum)

GAMBLING CAN IMPACT YOUR BRAIN

Like drugs and alcohol, gambling impacts the reward pathway in the brain



When life feels overwhelming, our brains crave quick fixes. Gambling, vaping, and other risky choices all light up the brain's reward system — but they don't fix the real problem.

Have you ever kept playing or paying
because you felt you were 'about to
win'?

REMEMBER GAMBLING IS NOT ABOUT THE MONEY

“ I realized after all the money I spent, I could have bought those concert tickets I wanted.” Westchester HS Student

ALTERNATIVES TO GAMBLING AND OTHER RISKY BEHAVIORS

"It's about finding stuff that makes you feel good long-term, not just for a few minutes."

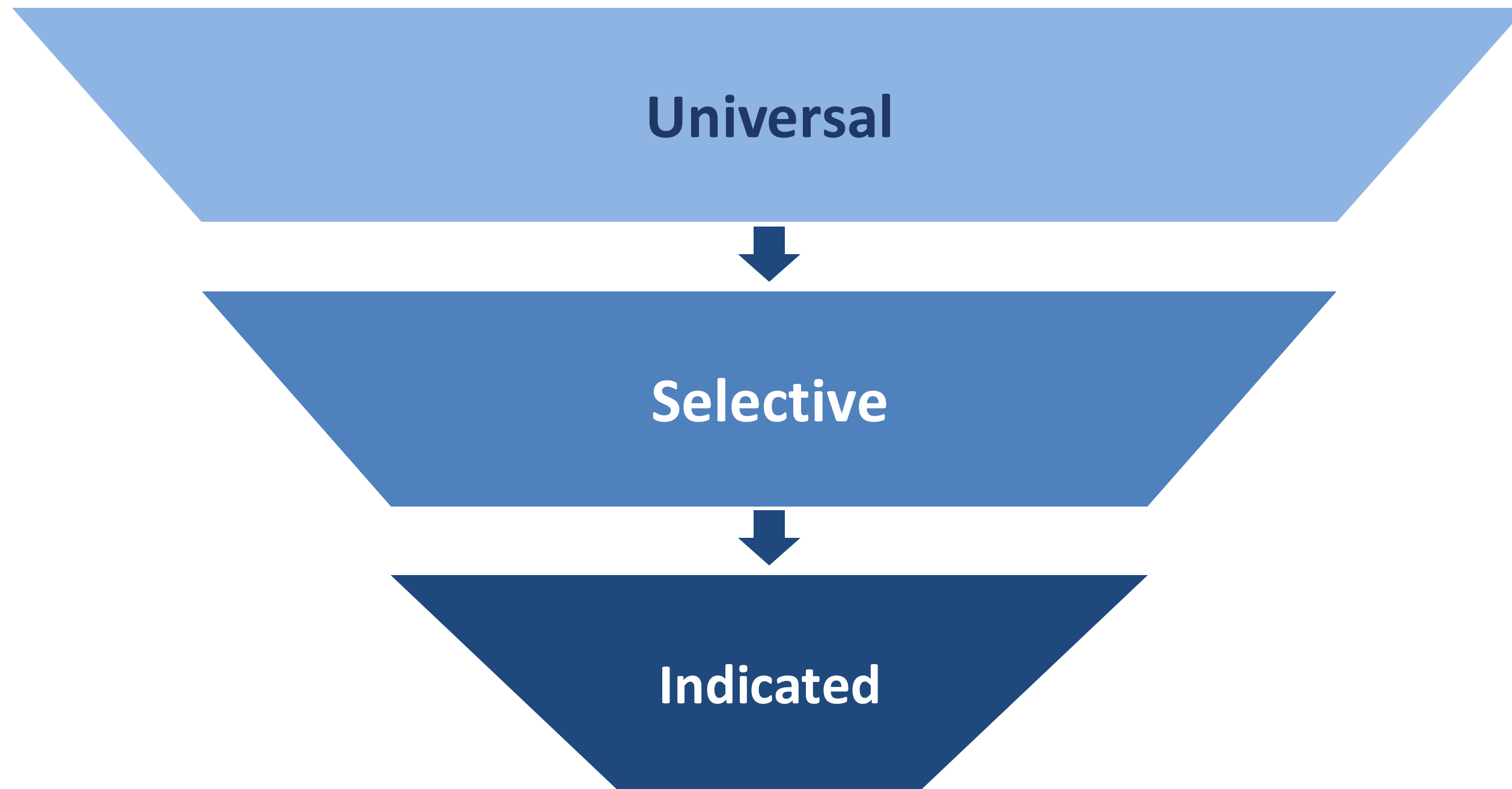
REMEMBER

- Gambling isn't just about money
- It affects **stress levels, emotions, sleep, focus, and decision-making**
- The brain develops into your mid-20s → teens are **more vulnerable**
- **Help exists**, and talking early makes a big difference

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

**PREVENTION DOESN'T END
WITH ONE PRESENTATION**

PREVENTION FRAMEWORK



Evidence Based Strategies



**CORRECTS
MISCONCEPTIONS**



**INCREASES
PERCEIVED RISK**



**REDUCES
STIGMA**



**BUILDS
PROTECTIVE
FACTORS**



**SUPPORTS EARLY
IDENTIFICATION &
INTERVENTION**

Gambling Prevention

Rise in sports betting
Gaming overlap
Mental health Concerns
Normalization

Community Readiness

Community readiness is the degree to which a community is ready to take action on an issue. Source: Community Tool Box ctb.ku.edu



- Schools
- Partners
- Families
- Communities
- Systems

Reinforcing Prevention through Multiple Strategies



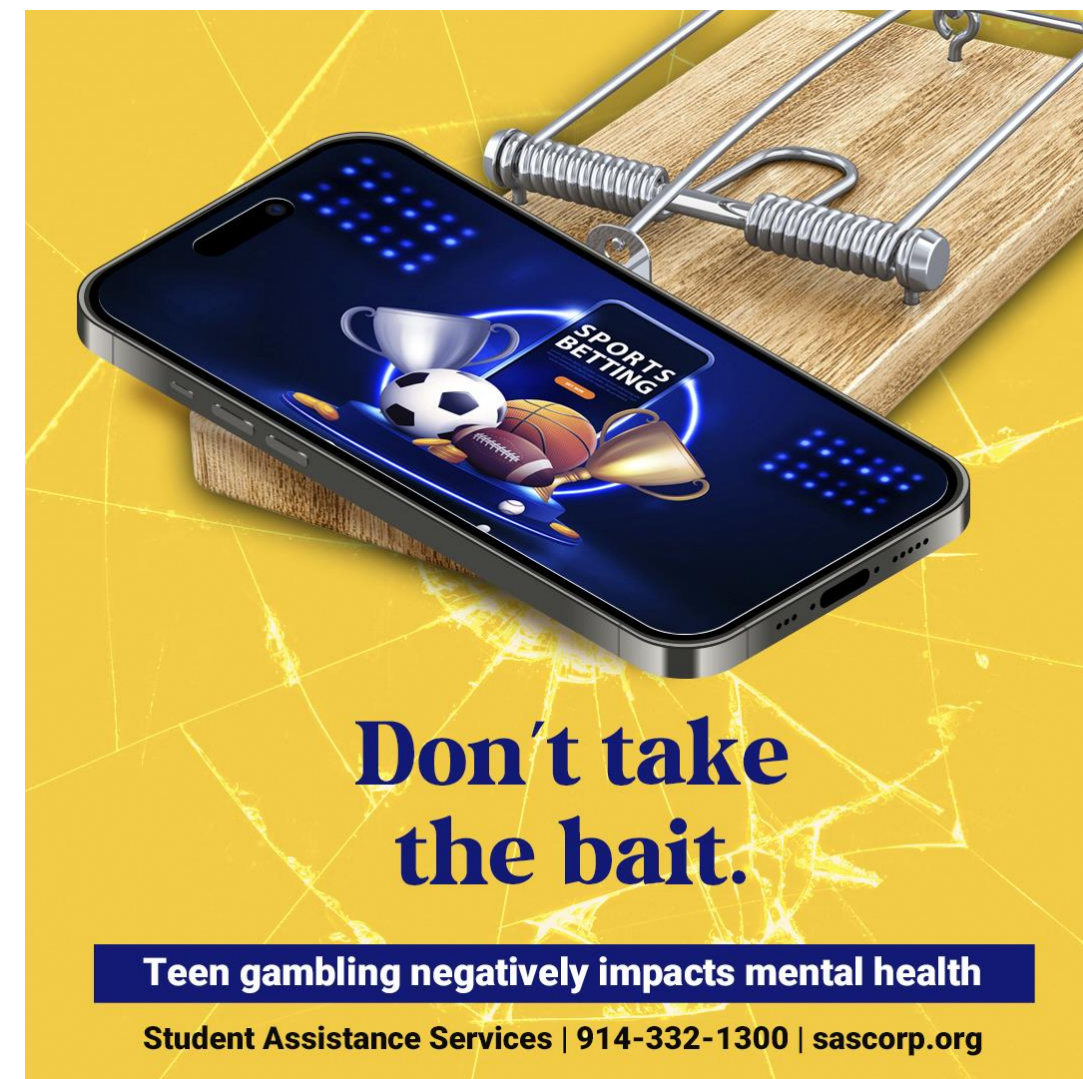
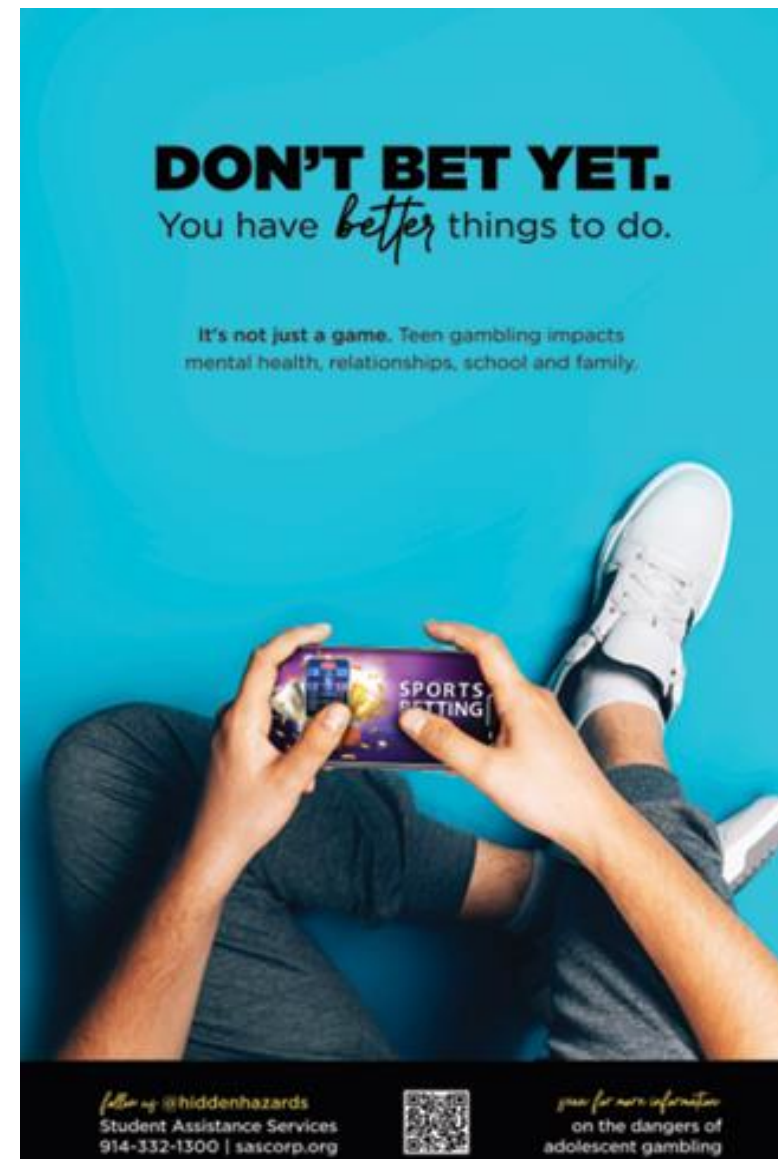
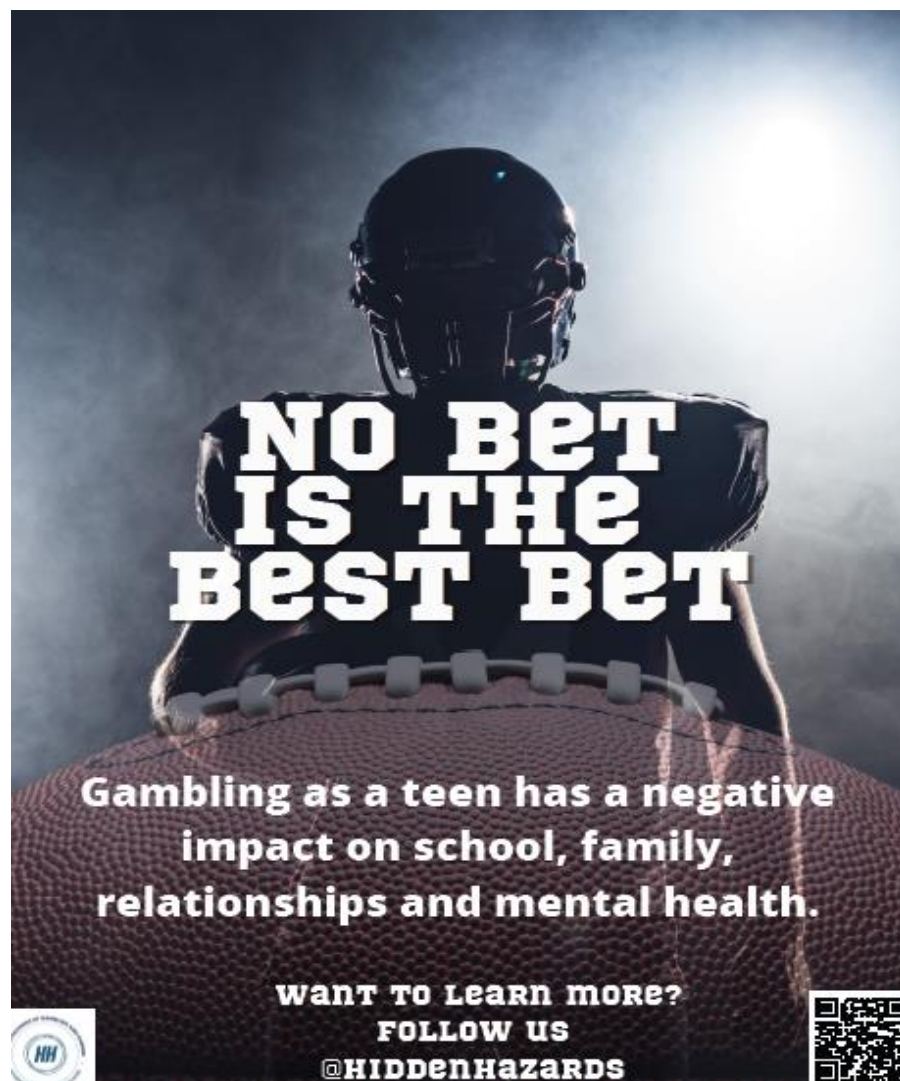
Bringing Prevention To Life

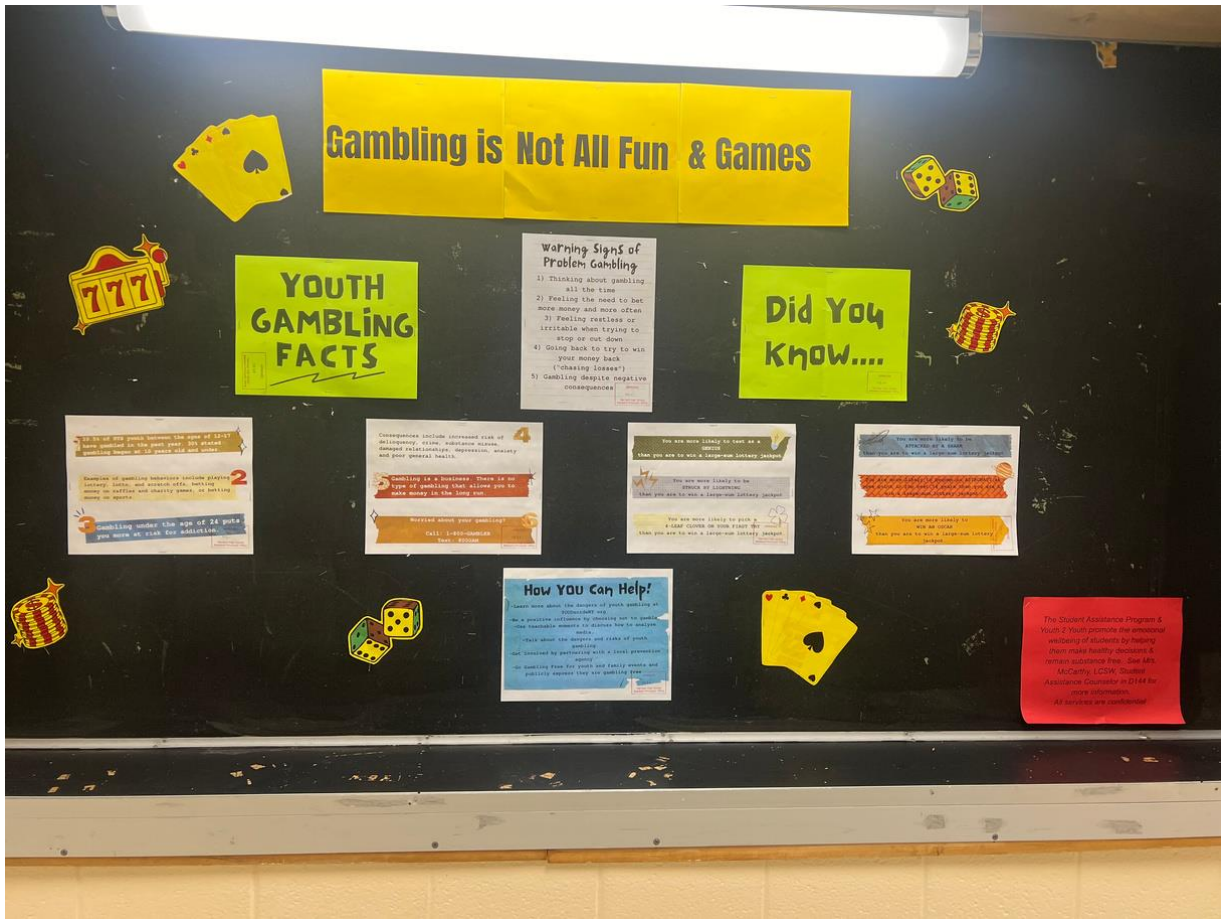
Universal Strategies

YOUTH

Targeted Marketing Campaigns:

Awareness campaigns throughout the year





TOOLKIT

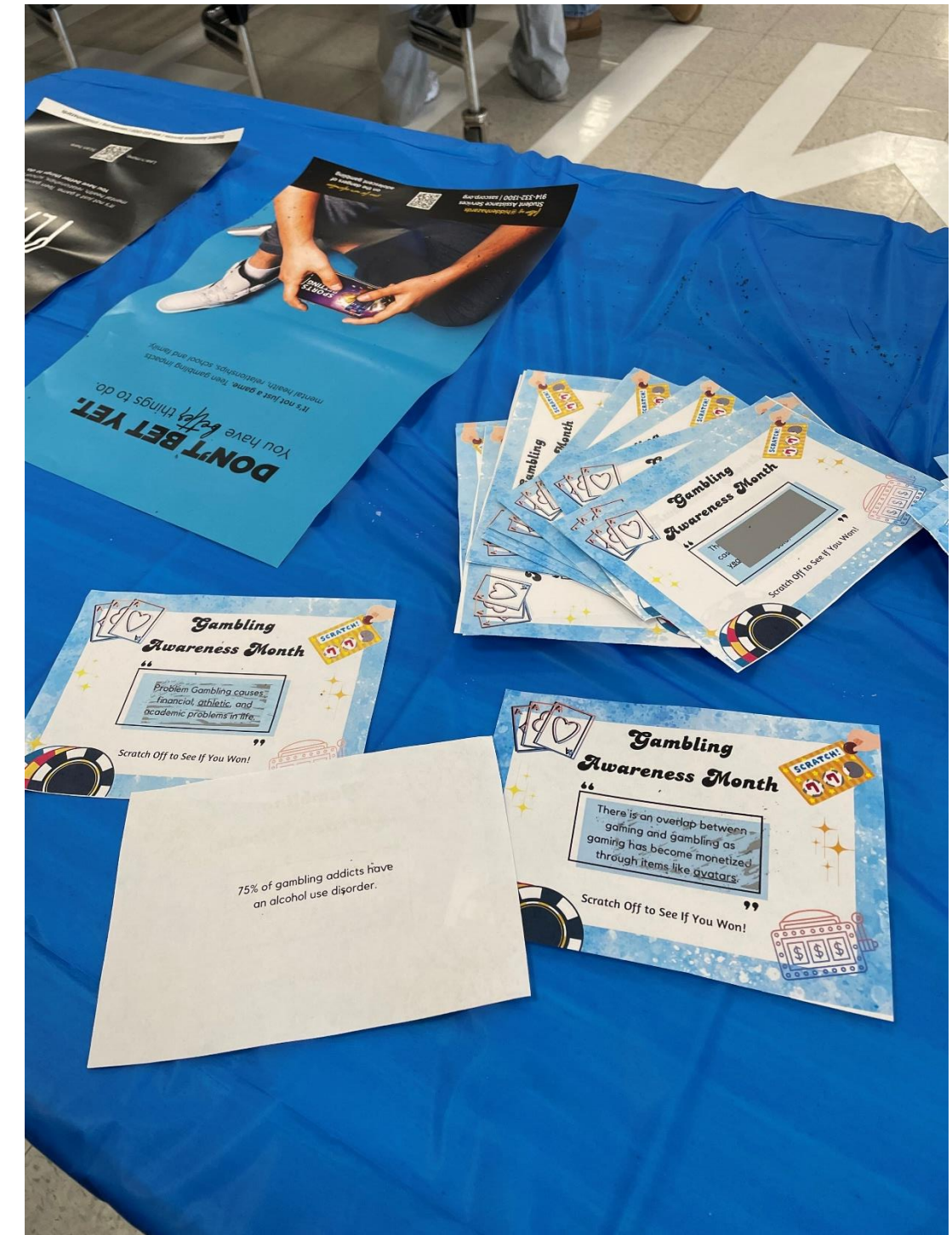
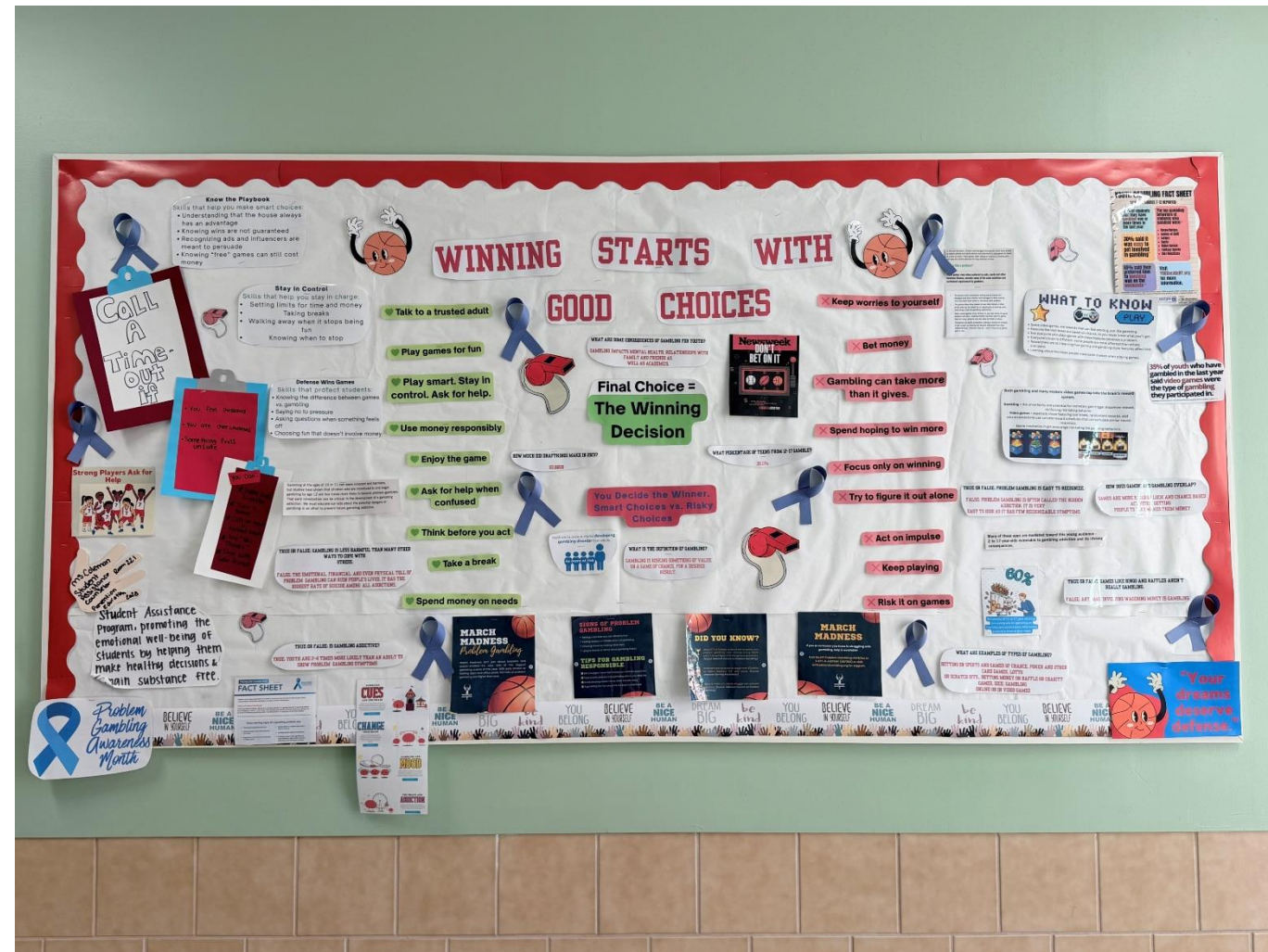
Items included in the bag:

- Giveaways: Tattoos, Stickers, Candy, wristband
- Hidden Hazards Memory Game
- Posters
- Tablecloth
- Resource Guide: Links (NCPG toolkit). sample school wide announcements, sample, activities
- Kahoot!
- Sample Parent Letter



A bright yellow rubber duck is centered in the frame, sitting on a white surface. The duck has a large, rounded body, a small head with a single tuft on top, and a prominent red beak. Its eyes are small, black, and circular. A soft shadow is cast to the left of the duck. The background is a plain, light gray gradient.

If you happen to find a duck please return the duck to Mrs. M in room 300S near the main office.



ENGAGING PRESENTATIONS

Dice Game



Rules:

- Pay one “virtual dollar” to play —one dollar for every guess you make during the game.
- Guess the outcomes for 10 rolls of one die.
- The casino will pay you \$3 for each correct guess.
- Choose a number from 1 to 6 for each roll and write these guesses on your betting slip.
- Write down the actual results as we go.
- Shout “Yeah!” each time your guess is correct.

Results:

- Give yourself \$3 for each correct guess.
- Subtract the \$10 (\$1 for each roll of the die) you paid in entry fees.

How many people lost money?

How many people won money?

As in real casino games, even though you heard constant sounds of winning, only the casino is really celebrating!

NOTICE: There is no sound for losing!

Roll	Guess	Result	Won	Lost
1	2			\$1
2	6			\$1
3	5			\$1
4	6			\$1
5	3			\$1
6	1			\$1
7	4			\$1
8	4			\$1
9	6			\$1
10	1			\$1
Total			\$	\$10
Net Total (win-loss)			\$	

BONUS QUESTION: In this game, what would the payback for a win have to be to eliminate the casino’s advantage?



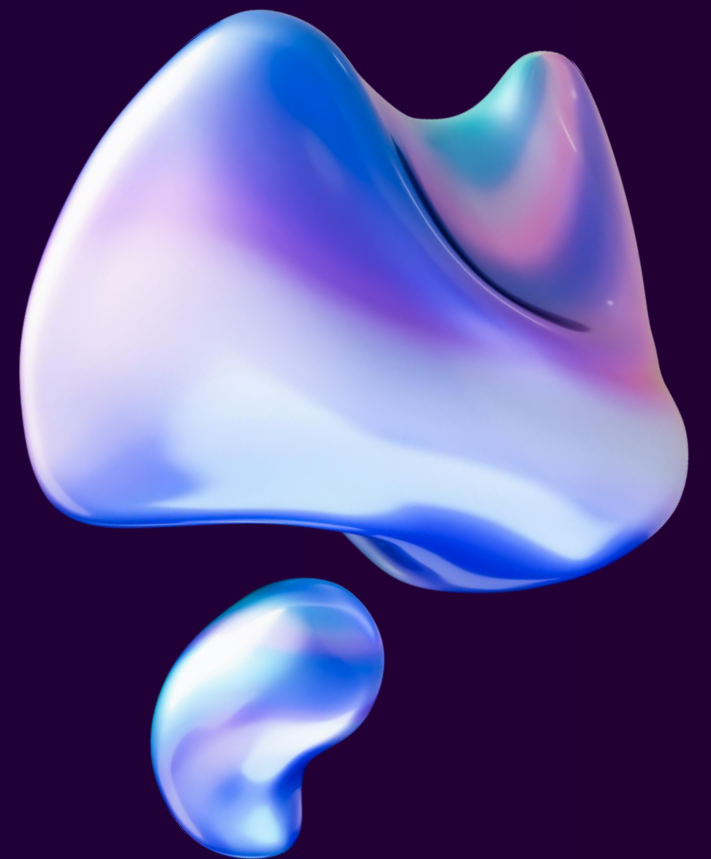
Let's test this out with coin flips.

Everyone flip a coin twice.



- How many people got the same result twice in a row, either two heads or two tails?
- How many people got the opposite of what they got on their first throw, either head/tail or tail/head?
 - Usually there will be about an equal number of people in each group. This shows that what happened on the first throw has no influence on what happens on the second throw.
- How does a failure to understand the independence of random events apply to people who gamble?
 - Most believe that their current losing streak predicts a winning streak around the corner (to balance things out) or...
 - ...they believe that they're “on a roll” and need to keep playing while their luck holds out.

“If the math is bad... why do
people still do it?”



Escape the ODDS

The **Gambling Escape Room** is a hands-on educational experience that encourages youth to think critically about gambling, media messages, and decision-making while uncovering the real-world impacts of betting.



Selective Prevention

High school seniors transitioning to college
Student-Athletes
Youth Leadership Groups
Targeted Small Groups

Indicated Prevention

Screening (BAGS, SOGS-RA)
Brief intervention (Teen Intervene)
Referrals

ENGAGING YOUTH



YOUTH INFLUENCING ADULTS



GUEST SPEAKERS

You can't PREVENT
what you don't know!

Marc Potenza MD, PhD: Adolescents, Sports Betting, & Gaming: How much is too much?

Adolescence is a time when the brain is more likely to become addicted. Just like drugs, behavioral addictions such as gambling and internet gaming elicit similar responses in the brain.

"TIP" JAR

TAKE-AWAYS - INFORMATION - PROMPTS

Did you know...

- betting is gambling
- gambling can be addictive
- Gambling and Internet Gaming Disorders can change brain functions
- 40%-80% of High School students have gambled in the past year
- 4-6% exhibit some features of problem gambling
- Boys are more likely to develop a problem than girls
- Adolescents and young adults have higher rates of problem gambling than adults

Risks of Underage Gambling:

- Anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders
- Impaired peer and family relationships
- Declining grades
- Pre-occupation with obtaining money for gambling and winning back losses
- Spending less time with family and friends
- Substance use
- Trauma
- Difficulty sleeping

Gaming, Gambling and the Internet

- There is an overlap between gaming & gambling as gaming has become monetized through items like loot boxes
- Teens can gamble online or on the outcome of a video game (e-sports)
- Games have been influenced by the gambling industry to have similar elements and be more "addictive"
- Adolescents gambling on the internet are more likely to report problem gambling
- There are blurred boundaries between gambling and gaming

Things to Remember:

- Remind youth gambling is a money making business for the sponsor, youth do not make money in the long run
- Gambling has become normalized, specifically with the legalization of, and widespread advertising of sports betting in New York. It is important for teens and adults to be aware of the consequences
- Parents should educate, set examples and guidelines, and monitor gambling and gaming activity

Tips for parents:

- Schedule times each day to turn off digital devices,
- Identify alternatives to devices for emotion regulation
- Create tech free zones
- Balance use of devices with non-screen hobbies
- Communicate clear and consistent rules for use of devices (ex. playing video games with others instead of alone)
- Have regular conversations about online activities
- Encourage youth to ask for help when cyberbullied
- Teach online ethics manners and safe behaviors
- Be aware of notifications on devices (e.g. when muted)
- Make phones distant when studying, sleeping, and during family meals
- Be aware of how parental technology behaviors influence youth behavior

ADDITIONAL
RESOURCES FROM
DR. POTENZA

<https://nyproblemgamblinghelp.org/mid-hudson/>
<https://nyproblemgambling.org/>

<https://oasas.ny.gov/gambling>
<https://www.ncpgambling.org/>
This will also take you to 1-800-GAMBLER

<https://youdecideny.org/>
<https://talk2kids.org/>
<https://knowtheodds.org/>

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REGISTER AT
[KNOW2Prevent.org](https://know2prevent.org)

QUESTIONS?
[INFO@KNOW2PREVENT.ORG](mailto:info@know2prevent.org)





MOST TEENS EAT PIZZA.

**MOST TEENS DON'T USE
ALCOHOL OR PLACE BETS.**

**LET'S HELP KEEP
IT THIS WAY.**

Teens can get alcohol easily from their families, friends, and others' homes. Drinking is linked to risky behavior, injury, anxiety, and depression.

Teens have an easy time placing bets using their own or family member's money. Betting is linked to many of the same issues.

Keep teens safe and healthy. Learn more at
PowerToTheParent.org



@Its_WeTeen

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Education And Outreach

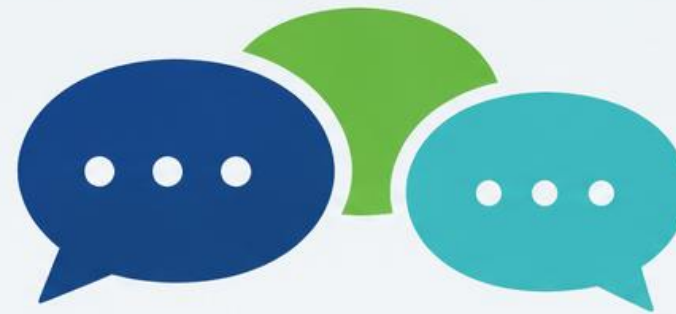


Key Takeaways

- ✓ Prevention works best when it is comprehensive.
- ✓ Collaboration strengthens prevention.
- ✓ Youth engagement matters.
- ✓ Gambling prevention should be integrated—not isolated.

Discussion & Questions

Let's continue the conversation.



Resources

Curriculums:

- Stacked Deck: An evidence-based gambling prevention curriculum.
- Wanna Bet?: A problem gambling awareness program designed for youth.

Websites: [Youthdecideny.org](https://youthdecideny.org)

References

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