



Aldersgate Youth Services "COVID-19 Weekly Tips & Activities" assists & supports parents, health care providers, employers & religious leaders who work with and care about children, teens, young adults and their families at this challenging time.

Weekly Update & Parent Tip Sheet

Gambling

The need to discuss gambling involving children and teens may surprise parents. Most people assume gambling is an adult activity. With the increase in video gaming, fantasy sports, etc. more children and teens are becoming involved in gambling. Around 3% of adults and 6% of kids age 18 and under meet the criteria for gambling disorder. Early research has found that .6% to 11.9% of adolescents are "problematic video gamers". The lines between gaming and gambling are becoming more blurred.



Gambling is attractive in the same way that gaming is. The release of dopamine is tied to seeking out novelty and feelings of being rewarded. To continue those feelings, the person will repeat the gambling behavior to continue to cause the release of dopamine. The instant gratification, adrenaline rush, convenience, anonymity, and sense of belonging, are all factors in the attraction to gambling and gaming. The definition of gambling is risking something of value when you do not know if you will win or lose. Often, the anticipated win, just the expectation of winning, is enough to cause the release of dopamine.

The human brain does not fully develop until mid-to-late twenties, and it develops the "gas pedal" faster than the "braking system". As with any potentially addictive behavior, the earlier one starts gambling, the higher the likelihood of developing problems.

E-Sports involves competitive video gaming in real time. You Tube and Twitch live stream tournaments. E-Sports gamers compete against each other, while the online audience watches similar to traditional sports. There are teams, leagues, sponsorships, media deals, and participants can bet on the outcome. When traditional sports were suspended due to Covid-19, gamblers found

other ways to make bets: on the outcome of reality television shows, the football draft, and sports in other countries.

A freemium app, free to download and play, includes in-app purchases, loot boxes, skins etc. that make the game more enjoyable and enticing. Gamers start out with simulated games and move toward real games that cost money. Including gambling activities in video games causes a false understanding of chance (gambling) vs. skill (video games).

In addition to the usual warning signs of excessive video gaming: interference with sleep, decreased family and social connections, anger outbursts when young people lose or become stuck on a level or in a realm, or when parents set limits, there are other signs to watch for with regard to gambling. Issues related to missing money, unusual credit card activity, obsession with obtaining gift cards, hiding their phone, etc. are also warning signs. Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's devices, on-line activity, You Tube and other social media accounts.

Gaming can be a positive experience if parents provide oversight and set appropriate guidelines to keep their children and teens safe. Check out www.common sense media.org to learn about video games, apps, and social media. Ask to join your children when they play; learn about gaming and the process of making in-game purchases.

Aldersgate is available for telehealth individual therapy and family counseling sessions. Please contact Aldersgate at 215-657-4545 or info@aldersgateservices.org to schedule.

Pat Wilcke, MFT
Clinical Program Coordinator

The following resources can provide more information:

<https://www.pacouncil.com> Pennsylvania Council on Compulsive Gambling

ncpgambling.org National Council on Problem Gambling

youthgambling.org International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviors (Canada)

<https://www.compassmark.org/> Science-based Addiction Prevention

<https://changethegameohio.org/> Problem Gambling Prevention Resource

<https://techsavvymama.com> helps parent navigate the digital world

www.gamequitters.com helps addicted gamers change their behavior

www.esrb.org provides ratings for video games

Visit [Aldersgate's You Tube channel](#) for an upcoming video on gaming and gambling.



Aldersgate Gambling Videos

We Create Success Stories



Who We Are & What We Do

Aldersgate is a non-profit human services agency located in Willow Grove, PA. We offer counseling and other emotional, behavioral health supports and drug and alcohol prevention/intervention services. Social and emotional learning programs are also provided at the agency, in area schools and in the community.

Aldersgate is currently providing telehealth support services for adults and for children, teens, and their families.

Aldersgate provides support services to students in Abington, Bishop McDevitt, Cheltenham, Jenkintown, Lower Moreland, Springfield Township, Upper Moreland, and Wissahickon School Districts.

Contact us for more resources:

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