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Attitudes Toward Youth Gambling Among Parents: Implications for Public Education and Prevention

This presentation focuses on the results of a recent survey carried out in the State of Oregon (USA) that compared attitudes toward youth gambling among parents and children in the same households. The study took advantage of the need to obtain informed consent from a parent or guardian before speaking with an adolescent in the household to complete an assessment of the parent or guardian's attitudes toward youth gambling. A sample of 1,555 matched pairs of Oregon parents and youth aged 12 to 17 was interviewed in 2007. Regardless of whether or not they themselves gamble, many parents believe that gambling by adolescents is harmless, that youth who gamble are unlikely to have problems in school, and that youth gambling is not associated with alcohol or drug use. These findings suggest that efforts are needed to increase recognition of youth gambling problems among parents as well as to improve understanding of links that are known to exist between youth gambling and other risky behaviors.

Risk and Protective Factors in Youth Gambling

Why is it that gambling is rarely on the "radar" when we consider the risks that adolescents confront as they move toward adulthood? There are many reasons to pay attention to adolescents who gamble. For example, research suggests that pathological gambling has strong antecedents in youthful gambling involvement. Another reason for concern is that children are most often introduced to gambling by members of their immediate family, few of whom are likely to recognize the risks associated with excessive gambling. A third reason for concern is that adolescents often begin gambling before they begin experimenting with other risk behaviors, such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

This presentation will focus on what is known about risk and protective factors in youth gambling, including parental attitudes, age at gambling initiation, and exposure to gambling opportunities. Data from several longitudinal studies of youth gambling will be a particular focus. The aim of the presentation is to identify behaviors that practitioners already working with youth may use to identify individuals at heightened risk for the development of gambling problems in Singapore.