
Media Release

Study shows parents naïve about underage gambling

Halifax, NS (December 8, 2009) — Youth gambling can have lifelong consequences but falls low on the list of parental concerns compared to more obvious risks such as unsafe sex and drug use. This is one conclusion from a major study by a Canadian research team looking at parental attitudes on youth gambling. “Parents as Partners,” the first study to explore parents’ engagement in youth gambling awareness, reveals very few parents are aware of youth gambling risks even as rapidly expanding new technologies offer teens more opportunities to gamble.

Researchers interviewed 2,700 Canadian parents as part of the study that was funded by a consortium of organizations interested in gambling behaviour, including the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation and other lottery and gaming jurisdictions across Canada. The results show that many parents have not recognized this growing trend among youth, and that they are likely unaware of the direct correlation between gambling as a youth and problem gambling later in life.

“Canada is a world leader in researching and understanding gambling behaviours, and this study looking at parents of teens is a global first. However, while there are some resources on youth gambling currently available for parents, and other resources being developed, this is still an emerging area,” reports Dr. Jeff Derevensky, co-director of the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University and a collaborator on the project.

Of the many concerns parents have about their children – from unsafe sex to drug and alcohol use – underage gambling ranks last, with 40 per cent of parents citing it. This falls well behind concerns about drug use (87 per cent), alcohol use (82 per cent), drinking and driving (81 per cent), unsafe sexual activities (81 per cent), and even excessive video game playing (64 per cent) by teens.

Research also shows parents are a primary source of lottery tickets for underage youth, as many don’t view ‘scratch and win’ tickets as gambling. Parents may also contribute to the issue by buying their teens poker sets or other gambling-themed gifts.

A positive finding was that 95 per cent of parents say they believe they are responsible for preventing underage gambling. In fact, two out of three parents think their children would be receptive to discussions about gambling.

Encouraging parents to speak about gambling is particularly important since unregulated online opportunities for youth gambling are growing at a phenomenal rate.

“Parents should be made more aware of the rapid growth of underage gambling activities, including on social networking sites like Facebook,” says Eric Meerkamper, President of DECODE, the youth-focused strategy firm which collaborated on the study.

Provincial authorities are working to improve awareness of youth gambling and to remind parents not to buy lottery tickets for their children. The upcoming holiday season is a particular focus for this type of prevention campaign, as well-meaning relatives buy lottery tickets as stocking stuffers.

-30-

For some helpful resources on how parents can engage children on gambling, please see:

www.youthgambling.com (click on Parents page)

For a copy of the full report, please see:

www.decode.net

For more information contact:

Eric Meerkamper,
Partner, DECODE
416-599-5400 (ext. 30)
eric@decode.net

Robyn McIsaac
Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation
c. 902-440-1551
rmcisaac@nsgc.ca