

## HIGH SCHOOL GAMBLING: Where does the line need to be drawn?

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knowledge is misguided largely as a result of the promotion of gambling as a harmless form of entertainment and enjoyable activity," the Centre's Web site said.

Whether socializing is a motivation or not, it remains clear that gambling among youths has grown, and researchers largely blame this issue on a society with changing values.

"Although opinions vary about gambling, in general a negative sentiment toward gambling has shifted to one of tolerance and acceptance," reads an edited volume about pathological gambling.

Teenagers are especially prone to gambling, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling, because of the mentality that follows with being a teen. Teens live in the moment, are technologically literate, are developmentally high risk takers and have poor control over impulsive

makes it "more fun to watch" sporting events. But, even when he said he knew that unlicensed gambling is illegal under Pennsylvania law, he said he will most likely continue betting in college because he has "good experience."

Some local colleges have policies in place to deal with gambling on their campuses.

Delaware County Community College's student handbook categorizes "gambling on college-owned or controlled property" as a "minor violation"—the same level as shoplifting and excessive parking violations.

### WHAT TO DO

The issue of high school gambling is complicated and far-reaching: it's illegal, addictive and growing.

But, how do schools and communities address the issue, and how do they prevent it?

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behavior, the group said, all leading to an increased likelihood of gambling.

### A LIFE-ALTERING ADDICTION

What doctors say is most troubling is how addictive gambling can be.

"There was somewhat an addictive part, but I had decent control for the most part," one Conestoga student said. Additionally, this student said he could call it quits from time to time, but then he added he usually picked it back up again once he acquired more money.

The Psychiatry study found that gambling at an early age might influence mental health later in life. Those who gamble are more likely to use, abuse and become dependent upon alcohol later in life compared to their non-gambling peers.

Gambling is also a problem on the college campus. Colleges may soon see this new crop of high school gamblers entering campuses with gambling on the mind.

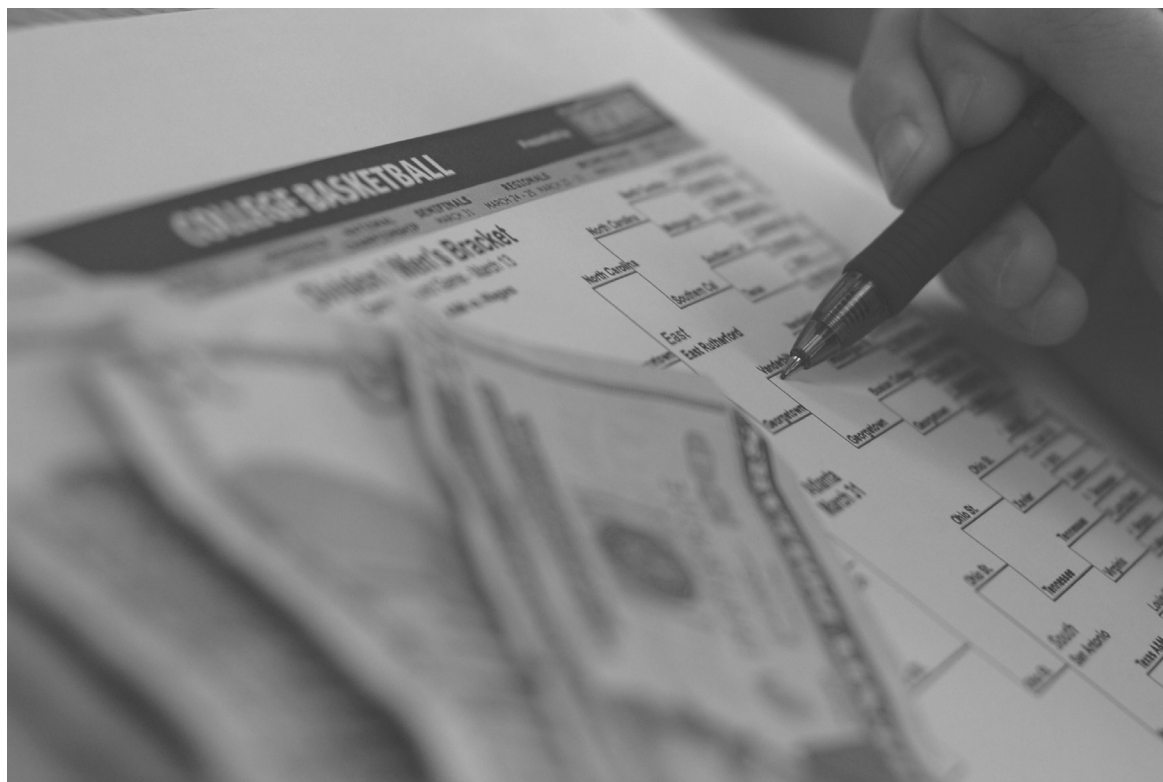
One Conestoga student interviewed said that he bet \$200 and won \$350 this football season. Why? It

According to the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behavior, an essential tool to combat youth gambling, as with many other addictive problems, is education. Increasing knowledge about the nature of gambling and its risks are what the group suggests as a course of action.

But gambling is not addressed, proactively, by the school or by local parent organizations.

The co-chair of the parentgroup Area Residents Caring and Helping (ARCH) Ellen Moeller said the organization recognizes the issues surrounding youth gambling. But she said the organization, despite working to eliminate alcohol and drug use among minors, does not address youth gambling.

Perhaps the most powerful way to combat high school gambling is to recognize its presence in classrooms, hallways and homes. Some students The Spoke talked to said they'd continue gambling. Some said they would not. And one had advice for anyone thinking about gambling: "I'd like to tell everyone to be careful because it can get out of hand real fast."



## Other forms of gambling March Madness and Poker

March is less than a month away, and that means March Madness for college basketball is just around the corner. Students across the school fill out their brackets, place bets and watch games. But placing bets is illegal. One student who has operated a large March Madness bracket pool since he was in seventh grade said he is aware but is not concerned about the illegality of his actions.

"It's not like there's really anything wrong with it," he said. "I guess it's illegal, but we're not dealing with too much money compared to what others bet."

Last year, his operation included about 60 people, he said. He collected about \$300 to \$400 last year, most of which was divided among three winners. He said he doesn't charge a fee for his work. In addition,

he runs a website so students can keep track of their individual bets.

Principal Tim Donovan said in an interview that he discourages anyone from participating in March Madness betting at school. "I would recommend that nobody participate in March Madness brackets here," he said.

Along with sports and March Madness bracket betting, students say they participate in another, illegal, form of gambling—poker. One student said he hosts a poker game about every other month, and that he also hosted a large poker tournament with more than 20 people over the summer. "I just like playing the game, and not to brag, but I'm good at it," he said.

## Gambling and the Law

"Small games of chance, raffle tickets etc. even need a permit and authorization from the state"

Lauren Bozart  
Assistant Press Secretary  
Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office



*Pages detailing The Spoke's gambling investigation were designed by Bennett Colesberry, Henry Rome, Jonathan Yu and Seth Zweifler. Photographs were taken by Henry Rome.*