

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Betting On Our Future is a gambling awareness program for young people that uses a variety of media platforms to reach out and share messages of hope and help to those affected by gambling disorders. The California Office of Problem Gambling provides funding for young people to create public service announcements, educational videos, and graphics in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. This year, BOOF participants were tasked with creating messages that target two very different populations: preventing young people under the age of 18 from gambling AND providing resources for those over 18 who suffer from problem gambling. The result: 42 inspirational public service announcements that expose the impact gambling addiction can have on families and young people in particular.



GAMBLING DISORDERS

The National Council on Problem Gambling defines **Problem Gambling as gambling behavior which causes disruptions in any major area of life:** psychological (mental stress, anxiety, depression, emotional breakdown, etc.), physical (health complications, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, etc.), social (neglecting friends and family, loss of social networks, etc.) or vocational (loss of job, losing productivity due to gambling, etc.). Problem Gambling is usually used as a general category that includes every type of gambling behavior that causes major problems. On the other hand, **Pathological Gambling is considered the most serious form of problem gambling, and is actually classified as a mental health disorder** by the American Psychiatric Association. Put in another way, pathological gamblers are those we consider to be addicted to gambling.

Betting On Our Future staff sit on the Prevention Committee of the National Council on Problem Gambling and are working to help provide a common understanding of "prevention" in the field of gambling disorders. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines prevention as follows: **"Prevention is a proactive process that promotes the well-being of people and empowers an individual, group, or community to create and reinforce healthy lifestyles and behaviors to meet the challenges, events and transitions of life."** Through their work in the BOOF program, young people are the guiding forces behind the processes to make their lives, their schools, their families, and their communities healthier.



STATISTICS

In California, the legal age to gamble is 18 for the lottery and 21 for most other legal forms of gambling. However, many young people begin to gamble long before they reach adulthood. Because it is more socially acceptable and “safe” than other possibly addictive behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and drug use many parents may choose to turn a blind eye to their adolescent child’s gambling. Like adults, however, teens can become problem or pathological gamblers, and are in fact more likely to develop problems.

- According to the 2006 California Problem Gambling Prevalence Study, **approximately 1 million California adults experience significant problems related to gambling**, and another 2.2 to 2.7 million California adults are at risk for developing gambling related problems.
- Based on other states’ problem gambling prevalence rates, the California Attorney General estimates that **there are nearly 600,000 youth problem gamblers in the state**. Studies have shown that, compared to adults, youth are 2 to 4 times more likely to become problem gamblers, for a variety of reasons.

The information in this section is from the Youth Problem Gambling Fact Sheet prepared for the California Friday Night Live Partnership by NICOS Chinese Health Coalition

According to the 2009-2011 California Healthy Kids Survey:

- 42% of grade 7 students and 31% of grade 11 students have ever placed a bet within the past year.
- 14% of grade 11 students and 44% of grade 7 students have bet money on card games within the past year.
- 11% of grade 11 students and 13% of grade 7 students have purchased a lottery ticket at least once in the past year.
- 20% of grade 11 students and 22% of grade 7 students have bet on sports at least once in the past year.
- 2% of 11th graders and 2% of 7th graders have ever gambled on the Internet for money.



RISK FACTORS

Developmental Stages:

Developmentally, the period of adolescence and youth is marked by risk-taking behaviors, experimentation with “adult” behaviors, and the need of acceptance by peers and to conform to group norms. These characteristics may predispose youth to be more prone to take up gambling. Research has shown that the human brain is not fully matured until about age 25. One of the last areas of the brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex – which is associated with decision-making, judgment, and impulse control. The fact that in adolescents and youth, this part of the brain is not fully developed has implications for a variety of risk-taking behaviors including reckless driving, drug and alcohol use, and gambling.

Early Exposure:

Most problem gamblers start gambling at a very young age, often age 10. Just like early use of alcohol and drugs, the early exposure to gambling can also create more problems. This is related to brain development – where the use of substances OR behaviors (e.g. shopping, internet, video games, gambling) over time to cause a rush of excitement/pleasure can create addictions. Addiction is defined in part by the adaptation of the brain (this adaptation is called tolerance – the need to use more/do more over time to achieve the same high/excitement). There fore, it’s important to understand that even though gambling doesn’t involve the intake of substances/chemicals, the thrill of possibly winning money also activates the neuron-chemicals in our brain, and over time can cause changes in the brain – thus creating addiction.

Lack of Coping Skills:

Gambling usually doesn’t just appear out of nowhere. Most youth problem gamblers come from households where 1 or more parents gabled excessively. Another source for youth to pick up

gambling is through peers/friends. We pick up coping skills by observing and learning from others how they deal with stress pain, and boredom. When a young person grows up in an environment where people used substances or gambling to escape their problems, then that becomes their coping mechanism of choice. Research finds that youth problem gamblers were most likely than non-problem gamblers to report gambling to escape, to alleviate depression, to promote relaxation, and to cope with loneliness. These same youth also report that gambling makes them feel more important, special, and successful.

Co-Occurring Problems:

Several studies have shown that youth gamblers also engage in the use of substances, including smoking, drinking, and other drug use. For some youth, particularly males, gambling may fit within a larger constellation of deviant behaviors that include delinquent behaviors and substance use. Youth who are problem gamblers are often also dubbed as troubled youth, and they are also more likely to report engaging in illegal acts, stealing, or borrowing money to sustain their gambling activities.

Gender:

A study in Minnesota of 9th and 12 graders found that males had rates of gambling participation 8 times that of females. A study in Texas corroborated that males are more likely than females to be a gambler. But when the Texas stud compared their survey results from the year 1992 and the year 1995, the gender gap appears to be closing (rates of gambling by females were rising). A separate study also found that among girls who actively play video games, their rates of gambling were similar to that of boys (think about how these activities are similar: taking risks for reward; color/graphic/music design; used to relief stress, excitement when playing, etc.)

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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

(Source: The Search Institute, 2002). The more protective factors that a young person has, the less likely they are to develop problems related to substance abuse, problem gambling, and other issues. These are some of the protective factors that have been found to help shield youth from developing problem gambling.

- **SUPPORT:** (family, community, school) – Youth finds high level of love and support from their family (could be parents, guardians, or even from an older adolescent), community and school (could be other caring older adolescent or adults).
- **POSITIVE OUTLOOK:** Youth is optimistic about her/his personal future.
- **REALISTIC BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS:** The family, community and school all have clear rules and boundaries for how youth should behave; and the youth is encouraged by both parents/guardians and teachers to do well in school.
- **INTERNAL CONTROL:** Youth feels that she/he has control over “things that happen to me”.
- **HIGH SELF-ESTEEM:** Youth reports having high self esteem and feels good about self.
- **CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME/CONTRIBUTING:** Youth spends time in activities such as creative arts, youth programs, and in community activities such as faith-based programs, etc.
- **GOOD PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:** Youth seeks to resolve conflicts and problems nonviolently.

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SPOTLIGHT FESTIVAL

June 8-10, 2015 marked the 6th annual BOOF Spotlight Festival in Anaheim, California! 150 participants gathered for 3 days to learn, share, and support the work that is being done across the state to create positive change in the world of problem gambling. Presenters from across the country joined us to share their knowledge and expertise on everything from gaming apps to the history of betting to how to animate your learning to personal health to the fall of an NBA referee to a brief overview of an evidenced-based gambling prevention curriculum! Participants also spent time in workshops learning about the importance of production roles in filmmaking, how to advocate for social justice, the path to becoming a DOJ agent, and how technology can promote financial literacy. And most importantly, the youth participants who have worked so hard over the last year, took to the stage and were able to share the spotlight as they presented their projects and spoke about their experiences in BOOF – it was a great night!

**Save the Date for
Spotlight Festival 2016
June 13 - 15**

Tim Donaghy

Dr. Tim Fong
Program Co-Director,
UCLA Gambling
Studies Program

**Freedom Foundation,
Random
Acts of
Theatre
Company (RATCO)**

Alex Ramon
Master
Magician

Royer Studios

Amir Windom
Grammy Award
Winning Record
Executive

Bo Bernhard, PhD
Executive Director,
International
Gaming
Institute

SITES

This year, 21 sites across California participated in the Betting On Our Future program and created a variety of multimedia messages to raise awareness of underage and problem gambling. 32 printed graphics, 21 prevention PSAs, 21 treatment PSAs, 17 educational videos, and 8 multilingual videos were created, for a total of 99 projects for BOOF 2014-2015!

- Nexus Youth & Family Services in Amador County
- Greenfield Middle School and Kern County Superintendent of Schools
- McKee Middle School and Kern County Superintendent of Schools
- Valley Oaks Charter School and Kern County Superintendent of Schools
- Napa County Friday Night Live – New Technology High School
- dramaworks/SWEET program in Plumas County
- Riverside County Friday Night Live - Youth Council Voice Connection
- Riverside County Friday Night Live – Moreno Valley
- Great Oak High School & Royer Studios in Riverside County
- John W North High School & Royer Studios in Riverside County
- Jurupa Valley High School & Royer Studios in Riverside County
- High Tech High School Chula Vista
- High Tech Middle School Chula Vista
- San Diego Media Arts Center
- Community Youth Center of San Francisco
- San Joaquin County Office of Education
- Asian Americans for Community Involvement
- Solano County Friday Night Live – Jesse Bethel High School
- Solano County Friday Night Live – Vanden High School
- Solano County Friday Night Live – Solano County Youth Coalition
- Mt. Whitney High School in Tulare County



All projects from the 2014-2015 BOOF year can be found at
www.youtube.com/user/bettingonourfuture