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CONTACT: Jennifer Kruse, (407) 865-6200

LOTTERY TICKETS AS HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR MINORS? KNOW THE RISKS!

Today, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) joined forces with the National Council on Problem Gambling and the International Center for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University, to urge parents and others to take the time to select meaningful holiday gifts and stocking stuffers for kids, versus buying unsuitable, quick-fix gifts, like lottery scratch off tickets, or other items not intended for children, which have the potential to cause harm.

According to Jennifer Kruse, FCCG's Executive Director, "The idea that a game of poker among teens or the gifting of a lottery ticket to a minor is harmless, simply because they are not smoking or drinking, is sending the wrong message that somehow gambling is acceptable for underage persons. It is essential to remember that gambling is strictly prohibited for individuals under the age of 18 in the Sunshine State. Of equal importance, attaching a lottery ticket to a child's gift or including a lottery ticket in a child's holiday stocking can actually cause harm, with research findings on this very issue directly correlating the receipt of lottery tickets as gifts during childhood with risky, problematic gambling behavior later in life."ⁱ

While most people don't have problems when they gamble, more young people today are developing problems with gambling than ever before, due to the availability, accessibility, and acceptability in our society. Many adults are unaware of the non-traditional ways that gambling is now popping up online, such as through video games – where casino gambling takes place within the game or players purchase upgrades that increase the likelihood of success or extend the game (extra chances or lives) – all of which are forms of gambling. Research findings from one study noted that those with problem gambling behaviors at age 30 were three times more likely to have engaged in a greater variety of gambling activities as youth. Thus, children receiving lottery tickets as holiday gifts have an increased risk for the development of later-life problem gambling, as this represents exposure to another type of gambling activityⁱⁱ.

Youth between the ages of 13-17 are among the fastest growing groups of problem gamblers, with prevalence rates in some states twice that of the adult population. According to Kruse, "Data collected on the FCCG's 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine supports this assertion, as 36% of problem gamblers seeking help last year said they started gambling before the age of 25, and 10% stated they began gambling prior to reaching the legal age of 18. Further, more than one-third (34%) reported the onset of gambling-related problems began before the age of 30. Whether or not folks are comfortable with the idea, children can and do engage with gambling. The FCCG urges parents, educators, and others not to dismiss problem gambling from the long list of concerns regarding today's youth."

Additionally, Florida prevalence research among adolescents' ages 13-17 reveal that at-risk, problem and compulsive gamblers acknowledge that the first person they gambled with was a family member, often identifying a grandparent, parent, sibling, or other relative.ⁱⁱⁱ "Parents and other adults must remember that just as gifting a child a bottle of alcohol or a pack of cigarettes is inappropriate, so too is the gifting of lottery tickets to minors. We must create safeguards to help protect our youth and ensure they understand that gambling is a risky behavior, as is the consumption or use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco," Kruse concluded.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG) is a not-for-profit corporation under contract with Florida State government, serving as the designated state affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). In addition to operating the 24-hour Problem Gambling HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT), the FCCG increases awareness of problem gambling through education and outreach efforts throughout the state of Florida, advocates on behalf of the public regarding issues relating to problem gambling, and provides programs, resources, and other population specific supports to those in need of assistance.

ⁱ Kundu, Priya V et al. "Gambling-Related Attitudes and Behaviors in Adolescents Having Received Instant (Scratch) Lottery Tickets as Gifts" *Journal of Adolescent Health: Official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine* vol. 52, 4 (2013): 456-64.

ⁱⁱ Caribonneau, R., Viataro, F., Brendgen, M., Tremblay, RE., *Variety of Gambling Activities from Adolescence to Age 30 and Association with Gambling Problems*, December 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shapira, N., Ferguson, M., Frost-Pineda, K., Gold, M., *Gambling and Problem Gambling Among Adolescents in Florida, A Report to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling*, February 2003.