

NEWS

For Immediate Release

FLORIDA COUNCIL ON COMPULSIVE GAMBLING SPOTLIGHTS DANGERS OF GIFTING LOTTERY TICKETS TO YOUTH IN HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

SANFORD, Fla. - The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is urging parents and adults to avoid gifting lottery tickets and scratch-offs to children this holiday season in partnership with the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) and the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University. "The Gift Responsibly campaign, during National Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month in December, aims to shine the light on the serious risks of gifting lottery products to children," explained Jennifer Kruse, Executive Director of the FCCG. Research findings show a direct relationship with receiving lottery tickets and scratch-offs during childhood with risky, problematic gambling later in life [1]. "Lottery gambling in Florida is restricted to adults by law for a reason. As new gambling products are introduced with increasing accessibility, underage gambling is a growing concern. We can all do our part this holiday season by being attentive to the gifts we select for children," Kruse added.

The campaign strongly urges parents, family members, and caregivers to leave lottery tickets off children's gift lists, and helps to raise awareness of the dangers of youth gambling.

To help understand the risks of gifting lottery products to children, consider these alarming statistics that speak to the inherent dangers and consequences associated with youth gambling. Despite the legal gambling age of 18, Florida prevalence research revealed 18.5% of adolescents ages 13-17 reported purchasing lottery tickets in their lifetime and 12.5% within the past year. In addition, the study found [2]:

- Lifetime participation in gambling was almost 70% among Florida residents, ages 13 to 17.
- Over 40% reported gambling in the past year and 11.5% identified as weekly gamblers.
- Adolescent problem gamblers also had much higher rates of alcohol, drug, and tobacco use.

Nationally, according to the NCPG [3]:

- Ten to 14 percent of adolescents are at-risk for developing a problem with gambling.
- While male adolescents gamble more frequently than females, female adolescents are more actively involved in lottery play.
- Four to six percent of adolescents presently have a serious problem with gambling.

Lottery tickets aren't the only gift ideas that carry risk this holiday season. Did you know that many of today's popular video games feature gambling mechanisms like loot boxes and incentivize the player to make in-game purchases based on random chance? In February of 2020 (but not on games released

before then), the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) began including the words “In-Game Purchases (Includes Random Items)” in their rating labels for games containing such gambling mechanisms [4]. However, though the ESRB’s Rating Categories are intended to suggest overall age-appropriateness for each game, it is up to parents to do their research and make an informed about what is appropriate for their children. For example, the ESRB’s rating category “T” for teen (ages 13 and up), is defined as “May contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language” [5].

“Compared with years past, today’s youth are facing an onslaught of exposure to gambling concepts, and these are not mutually exclusive when it comes to raising a child’s risk for developing a gambling problem later in life,” said Kruse. “Imagine for example that a teenager has been playing video games featuring simulated gambling for years, and then he or she receives a lottery ticket during the holidays. He or she is already primed to the misconception that success is achieved through chance rather than hard work and dedication, and the lottery ticket prematurely introduces to him or her the concept of acquiring real-world money by chance. Be wary this holiday season and beyond – do your research”, she concluded.

If you are concerned about your own, your child’s, or another loved one’s gambling or risk for problem gambling, confidential and multilingual help, hope, and information are available 24/7 by calling or texting the only problem gambling HelpLine in Florida: 888-ADMIT-IT. The HelpLine may also be reached through live chat on the FCCG’s website at gamblinghelp.org, by email (fccg@gamblinghelp.org) or by connecting with the FCCG on social media, such as [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fccg) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/fccg).

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG) is a not-for-profit corporation under contract with Florida State government. 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.

References:

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2. Shapira, N. A., Ferguson, M. A., Frost-Pineda, K., & Gold, M. S. (2002). Gambling and Problem Gambling Prevalence among Adolescents in Florida.
3. “GIFT RESPONSIBLY CAMPAIGN FAQ’S.” *National Council on Problem Gambling*, 13 Oct. 2022, www.ncpgambling.org/programs-resources/gift-responsibly-campaign/faq/.
4. Patricia E. Vance, President. “What Parents Need to Know about Loot Boxes & In-Game Purchases.” *ESRB Ratings*, 15 Aug. 2023, www.esrb.org/blog/what-parents-need-to-know-about-loot-boxes-and-other-in-game-purchases/.

5. "ESRB Ratings Guides, Categories, Content Descriptors." *ESRB Ratings*, 6 Feb. 2023, www.esrb.org/ratings-guide/#rating_cat.