

For Kids, Choose Gifts That Build Dreams – Not Problem Gambling Risk

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, held during National Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month in December, highlights the serious risks of gifting lottery products to youth. Research shows a direct relationship between receiving lottery tickets and scratch-offs during childhood and risky, problematic gambling later in life. Lottery gambling in Florida is restricted to adults by law for a reason, and as new gambling products become more accessible, underage gambling remains a growing concern.

To understand the risks, consider these alarming statistics. Despite the legal gambling age of 18, Florida prevalence research reveals that [1]:

- 18.5% of adolescents ages 13-17 reported purchasing lottery tickets in their lifetime, and 12.5% did so within the past year.
- Lifetime participation in gambling was nearly 70% among Florida residents ages 13 to 17, with over 40% reporting gambling in the past year and 11.5% identifying as weekly gamblers.
- Adolescent problem gamblers also had much higher rates of alcohol, drug, and tobacco use.

Nationally, many young people report their first gambling experience occurs around ages 9-11. According to the NCPG [2]:

- Globally, 17.9% of youth under 18 have gambled in the past 12 months, and an estimated 159.6 million youth under 18 have gambled on commercial forms of gambling, which are largely age-restricted, in the past 12 months.
- Among youth under 18, online gambling is the second most prevalent form of gambling activity.
- Young males aged 25 and under are more likely to meet the criteria for problem gambling than young females.

Lottery tickets aren't the only risky gifts for kids. Casino-style toys and board games like candy slot machines and poker sets, online gaming gift cards usable for casino-style games, video games with loot boxes, and sports betting gift cards or fantasy sports credits to use on an adult's account all expose youth to gambling concepts. These experiences can normalize gambling at an early age and increase the risk for future gambling problems, making it essential for adults to be wary of gift choices.

"The choices we make this holiday season can have a powerful impact on a child's understanding of money, risk, and healthy habits. Let's honor their future by choosing gifts that build dreams – not problem gambling risk," said Jennifer Kruse, Executive Director of the FCCG.

For more information and to download the FCCG's 2025 Gift Responsibly Guide and campaign social media graphic for free, visit gamblinghelp.org/gift-responsibly.

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 888-ADMIT-IT Problem Gambling HelpLine in Florida. Visit the FCCG's website at gamblinghelp.org to learn more.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) independent corporation whose primary mission is to increase public awareness about problem and compulsive gambling and to advocate for and provide services and supports to individuals in need of assistance for a gambling problem. The FCCG maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling while also seeking to assist citizens in need of problem-gambling-specific supports.

1. Shapira, N. A., Ferguson, M. A., Frost-Pineda, K., & Gold, M. S. (2002). Gambling and Problem Gambling Prevalence among Adolescents in Florida.
2. National Council on Problem Gambling. *Gift Responsibly / Too Young to Bet Campaign*. National Council on Problem Gambling, <https://www.ncpgambling.org/responsible-gambling/gift-responsibly-campaign/>. Accessed 7 Nov. 2025.