Don’t Leave Their Future Up to Chance: Keep Lottery Tickets Off Kids’ Gift Lists

SANFORD, Fla. – This holiday season, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is encouraging parents, caregivers, and other adults to keep lottery tickets and scratch-offs off children’s gift lists. The effort is part of the Gift Responsibly Campaign, 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.

Held each December during National Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month, the Gift Responsibly Campaign raises awareness of the risks of giving lottery products to young people. Research shows a direct relationship between receiving lottery tickets and scratch-offs during childhood and risky, problematic gambling later in life. Florida law restricts lottery gambling to adults for good reason, and as new gambling products become easier to access, underage gambling remains a growing concern. While the campaign centers on the holiday season, its message applies to birthdays and every other gift-giving occasion throughout the year.

The research offers important context. Despite the legal gambling age of 18, Florida prevalence research found 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% reporting that they gambled weekly.
- Adolescents with gambling problems 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 gifts that can introduce kids to gambling. Casino-style toys and board games like candy slot machines and poker sets, online gaming gift cards that can be used for casino-style games, video games with loot boxes, and sports betting gift cards or fantasy sports credits used on an adult’s account all expose young people to gambling concepts. These early experiences can make gambling seem normal at a young age and raise the risk of future gambling problems, which is why thoughtful gift choices matter.

“A child’s future shouldn’t be left up to chance. The gifts we choose can send lasting messages about money, risk, and healthy habits, so this holiday season and all year long, take care to gift responsibly,” said Jennifer Kruse, Executive Director of the FCCG.

To learn more and download the FCCG’s free 2026 Responsible Gifting Guide and campaign social media graphic, 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, helpful information and support resources are available. Download the FCCG’s Problem Gambling Resource Packs completely free at gamblinghelp.org/problem-gambling-resource-packs. 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 17 Nov. 2026.

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