
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, NY, 10591, February/March, 2018

A week in February is designated as a time of celebration and hope for children of alcoholics. March is problem gambling awareness month.

This newsletter explores how one person's substance use disorder and/or problem gambling can impact the entire family. It is important to know as we consider this topic that there is a lot of help and support for members of the family including Nar-Anon, Gam-Anon, Al-Anon and Alateen. These are helpful organizations for families and friends that can be a huge source of information and support for someone who is involved with an individual who has a substance use or gambling problem.

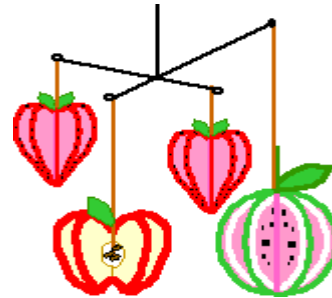
Substance abuse and problem gambling treatment programs are able to provide help to family members even when the family member with the problem is not in treatment.

Sometimes it is difficult for students to get to these resources but there are other resources for them including a members of the school staff like Student Assistance Counselors, social workers, nurses, school psychologists and guidance counselors. In addition members of the faith community can be very helpful and are usually aware of additional resources including others who are knowledgeable about the implications and impact of having a family member with a substance use disorder, or gambling problem.

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Substance Use Disorder and Problem Gambling *Impacts The Entire Family*

Addiction is called a family disease because it impacts everyone in the family. If there is an active alcohol and/or drug user in a family, whether an adult or teen, their use can effect the stability of the family and the family's mental health, physical health, finances, and overall dynamics.



A mobile is a very good visual of what happens in a family where a member of the family is abusing alcohol and/or other drugs. As in a mobile, if one part of the mobile is moved, removed or changed, every other part of the mobile is impacted. That same thing happens when there is a family member abusing substances.

Just like the mobile, living with an addicted family member alters the equilibrium of the family and can have far reaching effects on all. Some of the most common characteristics include interpersonal problems and conflict, excessive worrying, a sense of loss of control, and depression.

According to the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, normal routines are often interrupted by unexpected or even frightening kinds of experiences that are part of living with someone with a substance use disorder. What is being said often doesn't match up with what family members sense, feel beneath the surface, or see right in front of their eyes. The alcohol or drug user as well as family members may bend, manipulate and deny reality in their attempt to maintain a family order that they experience as becoming unpredictable and dysfunctional. The entire family system can become absorbed by a problem that is becoming more serious. Little things become big and big things get minimized as pain is denied and "slips out sideways."

The current opioid epidemic and increase in opioid overdoses have increased some of the stresses on teen siblings and children of those with a substance use disorder.

Students with **siblings** with substance use disorders are often:

- worried that their sibling will get, hurt, sick or die;
- embarrassed by their siblings behavior/reputation;
- conflicted about being told by the sibling not to tell the parents yet told by the parents to tell them if their sibling is using;
- scared by their sibling's dealer who may approach them to "get a message" to the sibling;
- frustrated that others think they may use drugs also;
- hurt that their sibling seems not to care about them or the family;
- angry that parents spend so much time/money on addressing the sibling's substance use disorder;
- sad that their sibling is using, has overdosed, been arrested, etc.;
- ambivalent about being a passenger when their sibling is driving;
- reluctant to be an additional burden for the parents;
- pressured by siblings to use substances and/or using substances to "bond" with their sibling;
- sick or reporting physical problems because of the stress of all of the above.

It is important to reach out to students when a sibling's incident/overdose is public information and provide them with empathetic support, information, and referral to websites, programs and/or professionals. It is also helpful to have them identify existing sources of support.

While there are some similar characteristics of siblings and children of people with substance use disorders, there are some additional concerns for the teen **when the parent has the substance use disorder**. These may include:

- feeling responsible directly or indirectly for the parent's substance use
- thinking if the parent(s) "really loved me, they wouldn't use the substances"
- being angry at the non-using parent (if there is one) for causing the other parent's use or for not getting the other parent help to stop using, and/or for not making things better for the children
- sometimes wanting the parent to use because the parent under the influence may be nicer, more permissive, calmer, etc., but then feeling guilty for wanting the parent to use.

Many of the characteristics described above are also characteristic of family members of problem gamblers.

For more information contact:
The National Association for
Children of Addiction (NACoA)
at 888-554 COAS or visit their
website at www.nacoa.org



For teens impacted by a family member's problem gambling contact www.gam-anon.org.

For more information about problem gambling contact the NY Council on Problem Gambling at 518-867-4084 or visit they website at www.nyproblemgambling.org

For locations of substance abuse and problem gambling prevention and treatment programs in Westchester and Hudson Valley go to www.fordrughelp.com, the website for the Mid-Hudson Regional Addiction Resource Center.



March is Gambling Awareness Month

Issues associated with problem gambling are not very different than the issues confronted by the family who have a member with a substance use disorder. For most people, gambling is a recreational activity. For many it is a social experience, and a form of entertainment that is usually shared with friends around common interests like sporting events or a game of cards. The majority of people will gamble without having any negative effects from it.

However, for others, gambling can become a compulsion and an uncontrollable behavior. It becomes something that the gambler, like the substance abuser do to the detriment to other aspects of their life. It is important to understand the difference between responsible gambling and problem gambling as it is critical in keeping ourselves, our friends and our loved ones safe from gambling addiction.

According to the New York State Council on Problem Gambling (NYSCPG), gambling is the act of wagering something when there is an uncertain outcome. When we gamble, we're placing an item of value at risk in an attempt to gain something of even greater value. The act of gaining that greater value, whether it is money, an object or service, can be the result of either the skill of the gambler or luck.

THE NYSCPG goes on to say that as a group, adolescents are at great risk for developing gambling problems. It isn't until around the age of 25 that teenagers brains are done developing and the last part of the brain to fully develop is the prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for decision making and critical thinking. As a result, many teens make poor decisions about gambling.

YOU(TH) DECIDE NY

You(th) Decide NY was developed to help teens understand the realities and the potential consequences of gambling, and to empower them to share their knowledge with their peers, parents, and community members.

Teen Gambling Warning Signs:

- ◆ Unexplained absences from school or classes
- ◆ Sudden drop in grades
- ◆ Change of personality or behavior
- ◆ Exaggerated display of money
- ◆ Bragging about gambling activities
- ◆ Intense interest in gambling conversations
- ◆ Unusual interest in sports scores
- ◆ Unaccountable explanation for new items of value in possession
- ◆ Borrowing or stealing money
- ◆ Using earmarked money for gambling
- ◆ Withdrawing from family and friends
- ◆ Uncharacteristically forgetting appointments or other important dates
- ◆ Exaggerated use of the word "bet" or other gambling language in conversations.



You(th) Decide NY suggests a number of things that can be done in our communities to help prevent underage gambling:

- Increase youth awareness that media messages are constructed using specific techniques to convey meaning and affect the viewer/listener's beliefs and actions.
- Help youth understand the realities and potential negative consequences of gambling.
- Decrease youth exposure to gambling and gambling advertising at community events, school, etc.
- If teens are gathering at your home and playing games of chance, supervise their activities to make sure that gambling is not taking place.



Parents should also try to have a conversation with their child during a teachable moment, such as a gambling commercial, news story, sports event, or a TV show with gambling imagery. You can also use the tips below to have successful conversations with youth about underage gambling, or any other topics you may have in mind.

Have open conversations. Every day try to have open conversation about their day, their lives, and their peers. Find out what's important to them and focus conversations on those topics. The more they feel you care about what's important to them, the more comfortable they'll feel to share things with you.

Be non-judgmental. Teens are going to make choices that you may not agree with. It is in their nature to explore and press boundaries. Again, they are trying to identify who they are, and testing the boundaries is a way to find out what does and doesn't bring them joy in life. Try not to take their exploration as a personal insult, but as a quest for their identity.

Be resourceful. As you talk with your teen about their life, ask questions that may not seem too direct. If they feel interrogated, they're more likely to hold back information. If they feel like you're asking because you care, they're more likely to share information about themselves.

Show genuine interest. Everyone needs to feel loved and important. Expressing genuine interest in your teen is a great way to help them know that although they're exploring their world and may be testing boundaries, they are still loved.

If you feel that your teen's gambling has become a problem, please call the NYS HOPEline at 1-877-8-HOPENY (or 1-877-846-7369). You'll be greeted by a welcoming, trained clinician who is ready to help you identify the type of help you're looking for and locate available resources in your region.

Up Coming Events

March 22

8am to 2pm

Youth Leadership Conference

For High School Students Only
CV Rich Mansion 305 Ridgeway
White Plains, NY

Limited Enrollment

Contact: 914-995-4115

rql7@westchestergov.com.

April 11

9am to 2

College Consortium, SUNY, Purchase College

For college personnel only

Contact: Patty Warble,
(914) 332-1300

April 25

7pm

For Adults and Teens

Reefer Sanity:

A Smart Approach to Marijuana

Kevin Sabet, PhD

Cortlandt Town Hall

1 Heady St.

Cortlandt, NY