



An Awareness Toolkit to Promote Responsible Gambling & Prevent Underage Gambling

For Behavioral Health Providers & Preventionists 2025 Edition



The Maryland Center *of Excellence*
on Problem Gambling

To print: this guide was designed to be printed double sided, long edge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This Guide is a compilation of information provided by the Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency, the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), NCPG Affiliates, additional Organizations across the country, and the Center.

Introduction and Overview

'Tis the season for festive celebrations, generosity, and family gatherings.

It is also a season where indulgence is more acceptable, mental stress can be heightened, and financial strains are stretched to the limit. For those who are struggling with, and affected by, problems caused by gambling behaviors and actions around the holidays can be magnified.

Each year, the Center promotes and supports messaging around several campaigns that bring awareness of responsible gambling behaviors, overall wellness and resources available for those that may be struggling with problem gambling. This messaging often coincides with national public health awareness campaigns, however, in November and December, we put the focus solely on the prohibition of gifting lottery tickets to underaged youth.



Gift Responsibly – Don't Gift Lottery Tickets to Children



In Maryland, the legal age to buy and use lottery scratch-offs is 18 years of age. Each year, the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) and the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University asks lotteries and other organizations in the United States and around the world to support the responsible gambling campaign and help raise awareness regarding the risks of underage lottery play during the holiday season as well as throughout the year.

The Center embraces this campaign to encourage adults to not give a lottery ticket to ANY child under the age of 18, and to have the conversation with family members of all ages about the risks of gambling.

The Center

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling (the Center) is a program of the University of Maryland School of Medicine and funded by the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration. The Center promotes healthy and informed choices regarding gambling and problem gambling through public awareness, training and education, prevention, technical assistance to the behavioral health care system, peer recovery support, research, and public policy. It does so by working closely with appropriate state stakeholders and bringing together experts from a variety of disciplines including psychiatry, medicine, epidemiology, social work, law, and others.

For More Information and Assistance, Contact:



Heather Eshleman, MPH

Program Director

(667) 214-2128 ~ heshleman@som.umaryland.edu



Mike Kafes

Communications Manager

(443) 413-4593 ~ mkafes@som.umaryland.edu

2025 Gift Responsibly Campaign

'Tis The Season for Gifting Responsibly

At this gift-giving time of year, lottery scratch off tickets are a popular and easy gift to slip into a stocking or a present. Holiday lottery tickets are designed to be festive, boasting bright colors and clever themes, and creating conversation and competition among family members who receive them.

Many view gifting lottery tickets as harmless fun for any age that adds a touch of excitement in the anticipation of possibly winning money. However, research shows that children who gamble – **including the use of lottery scratch off tickets** – are four times more likely to become problematic gamblers in the future (Felsher, et al., 2010).

There are reasons why the minimum age is 18 to buy a lottery ticket in the State of Maryland:

-  Similar to reasons why youth should not use alcohol and drugs at a young age, the risk of problem gambling later in life increases for youth who gamble at a young age.
-  Gambling disorders run in families. Children of disordered gamblers are more likely than the general population to have gambling problems themselves later in life.
-  Addictions often start as an unhealthy coping strategy for stress or untreated mental health conditions.
-  Gambling addiction often co-occurs with other addictions such as alcohol, substance use, and/or video gaming addiction.
-  Regardless of the type of addiction, brain scans show the same pleasure centers in the brain light up due to the addiction. This causes continued and even worsening unhealthy behaviors.
-  Just like cigarettes and alcohol are referred to as gateway drugs, lottery tickets can be a gateway to other forms of gambling.
-  According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 18% of Maryland high school students reported gambling in the last year.
-  5.7% of Maryland adults are problem gamblers and the percentage of youth problem gamblers is likely higher than 4%.
-  Populations at greater risk for problem gambling include those of lower social-economic status, males, African Americans, Asians, and those who have been diagnosed with a mental health or substance use disorder.

Have the Conversation about Gambling - Tips for Parents:

-  Talk to your children about the risks of gambling, similar to conversations about alcohol and drugs.
-  Teach your child about budgeting money and odds of winning when people gamble.
-  Be a good role model.
-  Encourage wellness for your children including healthy eating, sleeping and exercise.

This season give a child a gift, not a ticket. Avoid gifting lottery tickets to any child under 18 and have the conversation with your family about the risks of gambling.

If you, or any one you know, is struggling with problems due to gambling behavior, call:

I-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537) for assistance and resources.

Sources:

Felsher, Jennifer. **Lottery Participation by Youth with Gambling Problems: Are Lottery Tickets a Gateway to Other Gambling Venues?** International Gambling Studies, November 2004, 4 (2): 109-125.
DOI: 10.1080/14459790412331296956

Maryland Department of Health, **Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS) 2022-2023.**
health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-Main.aspx

National Council on Problem Gambling. **Responsible Gambling Lottery Campaign.** www.ncpgambling.org/

Jessica P. Brown, PhD., **Statewide Gambling Prevalence in Maryland: 2024.**
University of Maryland, Baltimore funded by the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration.
<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2024-MD-Gambling-Report.pdf>

Promote Awareness

This **HOLIDAY SEASON** join the Center to promote **AWARENESS** within your organization and your community about responsible lottery gifting, the risks of gambling and the resources available for help and hope.

Posters and Awareness Materials

-  Put up Holiday awareness flyers on your bulletin boards. We have included in this guide, two 8½ x 11 flyers you can print.
-  Distribute flyers and posters electronically to your contacts.
-  Promote holiday awareness on your website.
-  The Center can provide additional awareness materials for your organization at no charge. We will ship flyers, rack cards, wallet cards, posters and DVD's. Complete the on-line Public Awareness Materials Order Form here:
<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/public-awareness/print-media-order-form/>
or use the QR code: 

Website URLs

-  Promote holiday awareness on your agency website for gambling prevention and problem gambling resources for help and hope.
-  Promote the Center's help seeker website: [HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](https://www.helpmygamblingproblem.org)
-  Visit the Center's website [MDProblemGambling.com](https://www.mdproblemgambling.com) for additional resources.
-  Participate and download a copy of the 2025 Gift Responsibly Campaign Tool Kit from the National Council on Problem Gambling:
<https://www.ncpgambling.org/pa-resources/2025-gift-responsibly-campaign-toolkit/>

Email Signatures:

Use the following graphics in your email signature from November 17th until December 27th.

You can DOWNLOAD the following graphics at: <https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/gift-responsibly-2025/>



In your email signature or social digital post, link to any of the following pages:

- [HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](https://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)
- [MDProblemGambling.com](https://www.MDProblemGambling.com)
- [winningbackmylife.com](https://www.winningbackmylife.com)
- [ncpgambling.org/responsible-gambling/gift-responsibly-campaign](https://www.ncpgambling.org/responsible-gambling/gift-responsibly-campaign)
- [mdproblemgambling.com/gift-responsibly-2025](https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/gift-responsibly-2025)

Lottery Tickets Aren't Child's Play

Lottery scratch off tickets are popular gifts for family members during the holidays. What can beat the thrill of the chance to win money? They have bright colors, themes that make us think of fun, and can create conversation and competition among family members. Often there are young eyes watching the adults as they are thrilled to scratch off their tickets. Why does it matter?

Naturally youth are curious and want to join in! There are reasons why the minimum age is 18 to buy a lottery ticket in the State of Maryland.

- Similar to reasons why youth should not use alcohol and drugs at a young age, the risk of problem gambling later in life increases for youth who gamble.
- Gambling disorders run in families. Children of disordered gamblers are more likely than the general population to have gambling problems themselves later in life.
- Addictions often start as an unhealthy coping strategy for stress or untreated mental health conditions.
- Gambling addictions often co-occur with other addictions such as alcohol, substance misuse, and/or gaming addiction.
- Regardless of the type of addiction, brain scans show the same pleasure centers in the brain light up due to the addiction of a behavior or substance.
- Just like cigarettes and alcohol are referred to as gateway drugs, lottery tickets can be a gateway to other forms of gambling.

Populations at greater risk for problem gambling include males, African Americans, Asians, and those who have been diagnosed with a mental health or substance misuse disorder. 5.7% of Maryland adults are problem gamblers and the percentage of youth problem gamblers is likely higher than 4%. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 18% of Maryland high school students reported gambling in the last year.

Join the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling by supporting the National Council on Problem Gambling's Gift Responsibly Campaign. Information can be found at: <https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/> Post a message on social media, email the picture above to your colleagues and family members and most importantly, do not buy lottery tickets for those under 18 for the holidays. For those in need of help with problem gambling in Maryland, call 1-800-GAMBLER.

Sources:

Felsher, Jennifer. **Lottery Participation by Youth with Gambling Problems: Are Lottery Tickets a Gateway to Other Gambling Venues?** International Gambling Studies, November 2004, 4 (2): 109-125.
DOI: 10.1080/14459790412331296956

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Social Media

One of the best ways you can help promote awareness of the Gift Responsibly Campaign is to engage with the Center, as well as other local and national organizations on social media. Please take the time to find the Center on the following social media platforms:



Like, Follow, Share with us on FACEBOOK.

@MDCEPG



Follow, Like, Share with us on Instagram.

@MDCEPG



Follow, Like, and Retweet with us on Twitter (X).

@MDCEPG



Network, Like, Share with us on LinkedIn.

@MDCEPG

Social Media Posts & Graphics

Utilize your organizations' social media and post messages each day/each week during this holiday season and beyond. Links to suggested topics and messages for posting are listed below.

November:



Problem gambling can become an addiction.



This holiday season, remember to [#GiftResponsibly](#)! Lottery tickets never belong in children's gifts.



Where can you turn if your child has a gambling or gaming problem?

Go to: HelpMyGamblingProblem.org/getting-help/find-a-counselor



What does it mean to [#GiftResponsibly](#)? Keep lottery tickets, scratchers, and other forms of gambling out of children's gifts.



Gambling exposure during childhood is often through some kind of lottery product, given by an adult who is likely unaware of the associated risks.



Many young people report that their first gambling experience occurs around 9-11 years of age. Children who have early exposure to gambling experiences, including lottery tickets, are four times more likely to develop a gambling problem.



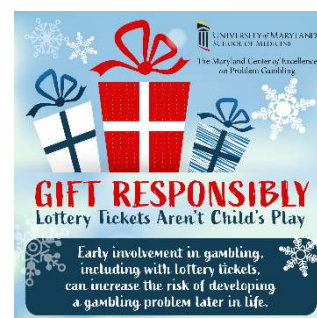
This holiday season, remember to [#GiftResponsibly](#). Lottery Tickets aren't child's play.



Youth problem gambling is a growing public health concern. Even though gambling activities are legally restricted to adults, there is clear evidence that underage youth continue to actively participate in gambling.



This holiday season, [#GiftResponsibly](#). Lottery tickets aren't for kids



Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

250 W. Pratt Street, Suite 1050, Baltimore MD 21201

~ 667-214-2120 ~ HELPLINE: 1-800-GAMBLER

mdProblemGambling.com ~ HelpMyGamblingProblem.org

- 🎀 Have a conversation with your whole family about gambling.
- 🎀 Early gambling experiences are a risk factor for later problem gambling.
- 🎀 Teen rates for problem gambling are higher than for adults.
- 🎀 About 18% of Maryland high-school aged adolescents report having gambled for money during the past year.

December:

- 🎀 In Maryland, the minimum age to buy a lottery ticket is 18, but you must be 21 to enter a casino, sportsbook or download a sports betting app.
- 🎀 Lottery tickets aren't child's play. Give a gift not a lottery ticket.
- 🎀 This holiday season, remember to encourage your community to [#GiftResponsibly](#). Lottery tickets aren't for kids.
- 🎀 The Gift Responsibly Campaign works to raise public awareness about the risks of youth gambling. Through partnerships with lotteries and other organizations, the campaign educates communities about the risks of buying lottery tickets for children.
- 🎀 Research shows that the earlier a person's participation or even exposure to gambling is in childhood, the more likely they are to develop a gambling problem later in life.
- 🎀 This holiday season, [#GiftResponsibly](#). Lottery tickets aren't for kids.
- 🎀 Did you know? Adolescents have more than twice the risk of developing a serious problem with gambling as the general adult population.
- 🎀 This holiday season, [#GiftResponsibly](#). Lottery tickets aren't for kids.
- 🎀 Whether you're stuffing a stocking for Christmas, wrapping a present for Hanukkah, or celebrating another winter holiday, one thing remains the same across all traditions: Lottery tickets aren't for kids.
- 🎀 This holiday season, [#GiftResponsibly](#). Keep lottery tickets out of family presents.
- 🎀 How can you tell if your child has a gambling or gaming problem?
Go to: [HelpMyGamblingProblem.org/gambling-problems/self-assessment](https://helpmygamblingproblem.org/gambling-problems/self-assessment)
- 🎀 Start the conversation with your family today about the risks of gambling.
- 🎀 Lottery scratch off tickets present a possible gateway to other gambling activities.
- 🎀 Many youths report their first gambling experience occurs around 9-11 years of age.
- 🎀 Gift Responsibly - Learn more: <https://helpmygamblingproblem.org/gift-responsibly-2025>
- 🎀 Does your adolescent family member need support for problems due to gambling or gaming addiction? Call, text or chat **1-800-GAMBLER**.



Feel free to use any of these graphics & postings or design your own and use our suggested social media messaging above.

Gift Responsibly Campaign Guidelines

The Gift Responsibly Campaign raises awareness about the risks of youth gambling and educates communities on the dangers of buying lottery tickets for children. Public education campaigns, like the Gift Responsibly Campaign, play an important role in changing social norms and providing basic facts and education. The following guidelines highlight the educational components of the Campaign and explain how to avoid triggering, stigmatizing, and demeaning language or imagery.

Campaign Guidelines:

-  Use #GiftResponsibly and [#GiftResponsibly2025](#) when posting about the Campaign on social media.
-  The Gift Responsibly Campaign is designed to educate the public about Lottery laws and support responsible gambling practices among adults.
-  Campaign messaging should feature non-judgmental, non-stigmatizing, and non-demeaning language. – Positive Messaging
-  Be culturally sensitive when promoting campaign messaging among diverse populations.
-  Campaign graphics may not feature any type of gambling related imagery.
-  Lottery participants are encouraged to avoid placing sales messages in campaign materials.
-  Children should not be used as part of the campaign graphics or imagery.
-  The Gift Responsibly Campaign can be used both during the holiday season and all year-round to promote responsible gifting for all occasions.
-  Recognize that other faiths and cultural communities have other events during the winter holiday season.
-  Organizations are free to use the provided materials or create their own. When using the Centers provided materials and assets, it is requested that for consistency you follow these and other guidelines in the toolkit.

Remember: that everything you need for a successful awareness and messaging campaign is always on our website

<https://www.mdproblemgambling.com/gift-responsibly-2025/>

Peer Recovery Support Specialists

The Center's Peer Recovery Support staff are compassionate professionals who have **lived experience with problem gambling** and have walked the recovery path themselves. Peers are trained and certified to offer a well-rounded approach to healing. They provide **emotional support, practical guidance, and access to treatment and recovery resources**. Peers also help individuals set and reach recovery goals, navigate the recovery journey with encouragement, and connect to community support that bolsters long-term well-being.

If you, or someone you know, has been negatively impacted by gambling, call the **Maryland Helpline** today at **1-800-GAMBLER** or visit **HelpMyGamblingProblem.org**



Southern Maryland & Peer Supervisor

William "Will" Hinman, CPRS, RPS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist

☎ 443-717-2439

✉ whinman@som.umaryland.edu



Western Maryland

Carin Miller, CPRS, RPS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist

☎ 410-299-1308

✉ carin.miller@som.umaryland.edu



North Central Maryland

Kenneth (Ken) Wolfson, CPRS, RPS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist

☎ (443) 690-9811

✉ kwolfson@som.umaryland.edu



Eastern Shore

Kenneth (Kenny) Crawford, CPRS, Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist

☎ 443-717-1137

✉ kenneth.crawford@som.umaryland.edu



**Talk to one of our Certified
Gambling Peer Recovery
Support Specialists today.**



The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

250 W. Pratt Street, Suite #1050, Baltimore, MD 21201

Main: 667-214-2120 ~ MDProblemGambling.com

Info@MDProblemGambling.com

GIFT RESPONSIBLY

**Lottery Tickets
Aren't Child's play**



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Maryland Center of Excellence
on Problem Gambling



Lottery Tickets Aren't Child's play

- 🎀 This holiday gift responsibly
- 🎀 Give a child a gift, not a ticket
- 🎀 Have the conversation with your family about the risks of gambling

Take a free, and confidential, no obligation screening if you have concerns about gambling



If you or a family member is gambling problematically, call or text the **Maryland Problem Gambling Helpline**

1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)

or visit **HelpMyGamblingProblem.org**

GIFT RESPONSIBLY

**Lottery Tickets
Aren't Child's play**

**This holiday, gift responsibly
Give a child a gift, not a
Lottery ticket**

**Children who gamble by age
12 are 4 times more likely to
become problem gamblers**

**Have the conversation with your whole
family about the risks of gambling**

If you or a family member is gambling problematically,
call or text the **Maryland Problem Gambling Helpline**

1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537)

or visit **HelpMyGamblingProblem.org**



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**Take a free, and confidential, no
obligation screening if you have
concerns about gambling**

Do You Have a Gambling Problem?

- Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?
- Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gamble?

Scan the QR Code to Take a More Detailed Screening



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**FOR FREE & CONFIDENTIAL
SERVICES WITH A PROFESSIONAL**

**Call ~ Text ~ Chat 24/7
the Maryland Helpline**

1-800-GAMBLER
(1-800-426-2537)

HAVE THE CONVERSATION... **1-800-GAMBLER**

About the risks of
gambling and...

**How to keep
gambling safe**

Call, Text (1-800-426-2537)
or Chat (HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)



- Confidential, 24-7
- Knowledgeable listeners
- Resources for help and information
- Referrals to counselors

HelpMyGamblingProblem.org



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