

## GUEST COMMENTARY

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# There is help for problem gambling

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Gambling is a popular activity in Tillamook County.

The term gambling is defined as betting money or anything else of value on an event with an uncertain outcome.

It can make an activity more interesting or fun. It can also lead to serious financial, emotional and social problems.

Everyone is at risk.

Estimates in Oregon are that 76,000 adults are problem gamblers, with males and females equally likely to have gambling problems.

Those who use problem gambling services in Oregon are, on average, age 45, have an annual income of \$30,000 and a gambling debt of \$33,000.

But you don't have to be an adult to have problems.

Gambling at a young age is a risk factor for adult problem gambling.

One in 25 Oregon teens already has gambling problems.

Teens who gamble are at higher risk for other problem behaviors as well.

In 2007, the Tillamook Family Counseling Center conducted a survey of eighth graders in all three local public school districts: 76 percent reported gambling at least once in the past 12 months.

A free, one-session, in-school problem gambling prevention curriculum was offered to all Tillamook County eighth-graders immediately following the survey. That session provided the teens with

guidelines for responsible gambling and common signs of problem gambling. Here's a condensed version of each.

### **Guidelines for responsible gambling:**

- Treat gambling as recreation (not a way to make money)
- Expect to lose (the odds are that you will lose)
- Accept loss as part of the price of the recreation
- Set a limit on time spent gambling and stick to it
- Set a limit on money spent gambling and stick to it
- Never borrow money to gamble
- Never chase losses (bet more and more to try to win back losses).

### **Common signs of problem gambling:**

- Lying to hide gambling or gambling losses
- Gambling to forget problems
- Financial problems
- Preoccupation with gambling.

In Oregon, help is available for the problem gambler and family members. That help is free, confidential – and it works.

Call the Oregon 24/7 helpline (1-877-MY LIMIT), visit the Oregon Web site (1877mylimit.org) or contact Tillamook Family Counseling Center, a certified problem gambling services provider, at (503) 842-8201.

*(Frank Hanna-Williams is executive director of Tillamook Family Counseling Center.)*

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