

Parents:

I work as a prevention specialist with the Province of British Columbia's Responsible and Problem Gambling Program. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the services that the Program offers. The Program is committed to encouraging responsible gambling practices and providing treatment if gambling becomes a problem for an individual or family. Problems with gambling can lead to financial hardship, relationship problems, and emotional and psychological concerns that can affect individuals, families and communities.

Clinical counselling services are available to people who have a problem with gambling, and those affected, including close friends, family, partners or spouses. Confidential problem gambling counselling is delivered free of charge throughout the province, either in person or by telephone. Group counselling and day treatment services are also available. To reduce barriers to counselling, transportation assistance and translation services may be arranged.

Education, awareness and prevention services are also available to schools throughout BC free of charge. Services include specific programming for students in grades 6-12. Classroom presentations vary depending on the age of the attending students, but content includes discussions regarding the increased risks of online gambling, the similarities and differences between gaming and gambling, the signs of problem gambling, responsible gambling strategies as well as information regarding odds and the difference between games of skill versus games of chance. My goal is not to encourage or discourage gambling, but rather to provide youth with the facts, so that when they become legal age to gamble and are faced with making a decision whether to gamble or not, they can make an educated decision and are aware of the risks. I also provide services specifically for **parents** and for **Parent Advisory Councils**, also free of charge. This is a great way for me to follow up on classroom presentations. These presentations consist of a discussion about the predominant forms of gambling adolescents are engaging in, how to talk to your kids about gambling, how to recognize the warning signs (gambling is often referred to as a hidden addiction because the effects are often not necessarily as glaring, as compared to substance abuse disorders). I also provide information regarding unregulated online gambling, illegal versus legal forms of gambling, and the links between gaming and gambling.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly for more information or to access these services.

Sincerely,
Katie Zacharias

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