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## **Problem Gambling and Gaming: More than Just Casinos**

You may remember the shooting that took place at a Madden Championship Series gaming competition late this summer in Florida. We often do not think of gambling and gaming as a serious disorder compared to substance abuse issues. However, Gambling Disorder actually has the highest suicide rate of any clinical population, at 20%.

This really made me think as I have sons and nephews in my family circle who enjoys such games. Understanding the Florida incident was an extreme level of gaming, with the number of online games ever increasing, gaming is gaining attention. The World Health Organization have recognized Problem Gaming as a diagnosable mental health disorder.

### **Responsible Gambling Recommendations**

Gambling disorder is a behavioral addiction recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Eighty-Six percent of adults in the United States have gambled at some point in their lives. Here are some recommendations to keep in mind if you choose to gamble.

- Never borrow money to gamble
- Always gamble with others
- Never bet more than you can afford to lose
- Do not gamble as a way to cope with emotional or physical pain
- Learn about the potential for addiction
- Include a variety of recreational activities in your life
- Remember the house always has the advantage

## **Gaming and Kids**

There are plenty of positives and negatives with children and gaming. Educational aspects of games or phone apps are one of the positives. Some online gaming does provide a social outlet for youth and following instructions is an element that is learned. Like anything, gaming to the extreme can lead to the negative such as obesity and lack of physical activity and effects on academic and interpersonal skills. Here are some things your family can be mindful of with gaming in the home.

- Agree on and set time limits.
- Make sure your child completes chores and homework before play.
- Be intimately involved in choosing the games your child plays.
- Check the age rating of the games and ensure games are age appropriate.
- Remember: you are the grown-up! Model good viewing and gaming habits yourself.
- Suspend play if your child is having difficulty with self-control.
- Monitor attitudes and behaviors with your child when he plays with friends or siblings.
- Advise your child not to share personal details online or in their profiles. In the case of teens, it may be best to discuss the dangers of sharing information online.

## **There is Help**

As technology continually progresses, know that there is a place to reach out to. Kansas offers no out-of-pocket cost treatment to problem gamblers and concerned others. Please call the Kansas Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-522-4700 to get connected!

If you would like to get involved in another way, there is a Southeast Kansas Problem Gambling Task Force which meets monthly, on the third Monday at noon in Pittsburg.

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