

NC PROBLEM GAMBLING PROGRAM

1-877-718-5543

<https://morethanagame.nc.gov>

If gambling is more than a game, free help is available.

Youth Prevention Education Research Grant Program

The NC Problem Gambling Program

The North Carolina Problem Gambling Program (NCPGP) was established to provide and support effective problem gambling prevention, education, support and treatment programs throughout the state. For more information, please visit <https://morethanagame.nc.gov>.

What to Know

- Problems related to gambling, gaming and digital media overuse can impact both physical and mental health, relationships, school, work and overall well-being.
- Social media can impact sleep cycles and mental health and expose youth to cyberbullying, sexual exploitation, sexual content, alcohol and gambling.
- Excessive technological use can impair executive functioning in the brain in the areas of attention and memory.
- Youth with gambling problems are more likely to engage in tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Persuasive design concepts are utilized to increase the time and money people spend online.
- Gambling marketing and advertising are reaching youth and impacting their behaviors and attitudes.

Youth Gambling

While gambling is not a good way for an individual to make money, it has become extremely profitable for the gambling industry. The American Gaming Association reported over \$15 billion dollars in revenue in 2022. With the increased expansion of online gambling, young people have also increased their gambling activities. Despite adolescent gambling being illegal, youth engage in gambling with a prevalence rate higher than adults. Global findings indicate that 8-15 percent of youth are at-risk for problem gambling and 3-8 percent are living with problem gambling. Young people experience problems related to gambling at a higher rate than adults because their brains are still developing. This brain development, coupled with external pressure from family, peers, social media and industry marketing influences their decision making and behaviors.

Youth Prevention Education

Youth prevention education is a comprehensive approach that focuses on equipping young people with knowledge, skills, and protective factors to prevent risky behaviors and promote healthy development. Research indicates students must address their health, safety, and wellbeing to reach their full academic potential. Prevention Education interventions can involve families, schools, and communities, and may target individual students or entire populations of youth through evidence-based programs and curricula.

This type of education typically addresses multiple areas including:

- Substance misuse prevention (alcohol, tobacco, drugs)
- Problematic behavior prevention (gambling, gaming, digital media use)
- Violence prevention (bullying, dating violence, conflict resolution)

- Mental health awareness and coping skills
- Social-emotional learning
- Healthy decision-making and life skills

Youth Prevention Education and Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning is the process in which adults and youth learn competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. It is the process through which children, adolescents and adults learn skills to support healthy development and relationships. Universal Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is promoted across the country as an excellent prevention tool for school systems. Evidence shows that when SEL is embedded into learning with intentional efforts, students have more positive attitudes toward self and others and in the long term have better mental health and academic success. For more information on SEL, please visit <https://www.dpi.nc.gov>.

The NCPGP Youth Prevention Education Curriculum Research Project

The North Carolina Problem Gambling Program addresses youth problem gambling as part of a broader effort to prevent high-risk behaviors among young people. The program educates students about how their environments—social, physical, and digital—can create toxic stress. This stress impairs critical thinking and emotional regulation, often leading young people to develop unhealthy coping mechanisms. Over time, these patterns can evolve into harmful behaviors and addictions that compromise brain health. Through an evidence-informed curriculum, students explore the neuroscience behind both healthy and unhealthy behaviors and environments. The program uses interactive learning methods, including self-reflection exercises and real-life examples and analysis of a relatable character's choices named Sam the Fish, to help students recognize behavioral patterns in themselves and others. By understanding the science of stress, decision-making, and addiction, students gain tools to make healthier choices and build resilience. We are asking teachers and students to evaluate the curriculum by answering questions provided by a research team in a free software program called Qualtrics. We are engaging in this process to evaluate the youth prevention education curriculum to further the understanding of how it is impacting students' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors.

Research Project Details and Timeline

The research project will take place across the 2026-2027 school year, with data collection across three timepoints for those exposed to the curriculum (i.e., students). Selected grant applicants will be randomized into two cohorts: a Fall 2026 cohort and a Winter 2027 cohort. Those selected for the Fall 2026 cohort will be required to implement the curriculum during a set schedule from September to November, across a 6-week period. Those selected for the Winter 2027 cohort will be required to implement the curriculum during a set schedule from January to March, across a 6-week period.

Data across both cohorts will occur at the same time for all students, with an initial data collection occurring in September (prior to Fall 2026 cohort implementation), March (post Winter 2027 cohort implementation), and late May or early June prior to summer break. The data collection will be survey-based, self-report questions related to learning and knowledge gain, attitudes, behavioral questions and cognitive tasks. Grantees will work with the research team to obtain unique identifiers for their students to keep all data anonymous while linking responses longitudinally. No personally identifying information will be collected by students. Grantees will be required to obtain consent from parents, and assent from students to collect their survey data. The research team will provide, and train selected applicants on all necessary protocols and schedules to obtain consent and assent, as well as administer data collection tools.

In addition to collecting data on student outcomes, selected applicants will be required to provide their own data based on their previous experience of teaching similar concepts, and their experience in teaching this curriculum. The data collection period for grantees will occur prior to the implementation of the curriculum based on their cohort schedule, and during their implementation. Those selected for the Fall 2026 cohort will provide pre-test self-assessments in September and will provide weekly lesson logs with questions regarding experiences implementing the curriculum module. Similarly, those selected for the Winter 2027 cohort will provide pre-test self-assessments in January and will provide weekly lesson logs with questions regarding experiences implementing the curriculum module. At the end of the respective cohort period, grantees will provide post-implementation assessment. Upon the completion of implementing the curriculum, select grantees will be invited for qualitative interviews to broaden upon their experience.

Upon the completion of the data collection periods across teachers/instructors and students, the researchers will analyze the data and provide insights to all participants upon publication.

NCPGP Grant Information

Grants of up to \$10,000 are available for middle schools, high schools and at-risk community-based programs to implement the NC Problem Gambling Program Youth Prevention Education (YPE) 10 modules. Instructors are trained, provided technical support and given the materials needed to implement the program.

Instructors must also engage students in parent outreach activity. This outreach activity will take place after module 10. Instructors will be trained on how to engage parents in a “Poster Session” event allowing for students to demonstrate knowledge gains while also teaching back what they have learned to parents.

Mandatory Training

All instructors participating in the grant program must complete the Adolescent Gaming and Gambling Series asynchronous modules with the [UNC Behavioral Health Springboard](#) by July 15, 2026. All instructors must turn in their CE's to Alison Wood at alison.wood@dhhs.nc.gov. Once instructors have completed the asynchronous modules, they will be admitted to the North Carolina Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Studies (NCFADS) pre-conference summer school program that will take place in Wilmington, NC From Sunday, July 19 – Tuesday, July 21. The grant will cover all costs of summer school. Instructors will be responsible for registering for the conference, booking their rooms, and some meals. Summer school will provide lunch and snacks. Breakfast and dinner will be on your own.

Mandatory Orientation Meeting

There will be an orientation meeting scheduled for the first week of May. This orientation meeting will provide grantees with important information on the research project, timeline of activities, and other requirements. Attending this orientation meeting is mandatory.

Youth Prevention Education Grant Guidelines

Approach to Application

- 1) Grants of up to \$10,000 are available for middle schools, high schools, and community-based programs in North Carolina to implement the curriculum, participate in research, and engage in a parent-focused outreach activity.
- 2) Teach all 10 modules of the youth prevention education curriculum by utilizing the instructor manual, PowerPoint, worksheets, and engaging in thoughtful and reflective classroom discussions.

- 3) All modules must be delivered in the fall or early winter of 2027. It is suggested that two modules will be delivered each week for five to six weeks.
- 4) The instructors and students must have access to technology to review the curriculum during the school year by answering program evaluation questions.
- 5) Implement a parent engagement activity following module 10. This parent engagement activity will include providing an opportunity for students to provide information to parents on what they have learned by engaging in a poster session.
- 6) In addition to the parent engagement activity, grantees are encouraged to engage in an outreach activity providing information to the school and/or community on youth problem gambling.

Program Requirements

- 1) All instructors must have at least one year of traditional classroom teaching experience and/ or a teaching certificate.
- 2) All instructors and students must complete the online surveys provided by the research team to assist in evaluating the success of the program.
- 3) Make the classroom available for a site visit by the prevention coordinator.
- 4) At-risk community organizations must have partnerships with school systems to receive grant funding. First time applicants must submit a letter of support from the school administrator.
- 5) At least 30 students must complete the curriculum to receive funding. Those reaching more students may receive preference.
- 6) All instructors of the curriculum must complete the asynchronous modules with UNC-BHS by July 15 and attend the North Carolina Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Studies (NCFADS) summer school in Wilmington, NC, July 19-21. No exceptions.
- 7) All grant programs must engage in the parent outreach activity to occur after module 10 has been taught.
- 8) Instructors must show proof of parent outreach activity by sending pictures and marketing materials.
- 9) Anything printed should include the North Carolina Problem Gambling Program (NCPGP) logo and any poster contests or public service announcements should include the NCPGP Helpline. This can be emailed upon request.
- 10) The deadline for the grant application is March 15, 2026.
- 11) All changes or disruptions to the program should be reported to the prevention coordinator immediately.
- 12) All instructors will be required to fill out a final report in addition to making sure all surveys for instructors and students have been completed.
- 13) The grant award is official once the signed contract and approved plan have been returned to the prevention coordinator. Funding cannot be released until that official letter has been submitted.

Acceptable Uses for Funding

- \$500 for school overhead
- \$1000 for instructor incentive providing classroom supplies (per instructor)
- \$1500 per instructor for NCFADS summer school costs including the conference registration, mileage, hotel costs, and food
- Supplies needed for parent outreach activity
- Supplies needed for outreach activities designed by the instructor

Unacceptable Uses of Funding

- Faculty and staff stipends
- Cash or gift cards to students
- Field trips to gambling establishments or guest speakers on responsible gambling

Youth Prevention Education Research Grant Scoring System

The North Carolina Problem Gambling Program (NCPGP) grant application uses two scoring systems.

Scoring System #1

The first is a 16-point impact and individual criteria score. Applicants must receive a score of at least four to be considered for funding. Applicants with higher scores will receive preference.

Impact Activity Score Description

- The number of students that will go through the curriculum
- The type of outreach activity that will be implemented
- The groups that the outreach activity will reach

Individual Criteria Score Description

- A Title 1 school designation or the number of children on free or reduced lunch
- A school or organization in a county with a military installation
- A school or organization that is a first-time applicant or has not applied in five years

Impact Activity Score

Impact Activity	Score
Teach 30 students the curriculum	1 point
Teach an entire grade the curriculum	2 points
Create mandatory parent outreach event	3 points
Create an outreach activity of your choice	3 points
Present the outreach activity to the school	2 points
Present the outreach activity to the school, parents and/or community	2 points

Individual Criteria Score

Criteria	Score
A Title 1 school or organization that serves more than 50 percent of free or reduced lunch	1 point
A school or organization in a county with a military installation	1 point
A school or organization that is a first-time applicant or has not applied in the last five years	1 point

Scoring System #2

Applicants will also be scored on the grant application sections including proposed program goals, parent engagement, other outreach activity, project partners, proposed timeline for implementing the program and evaluation, and proposed budget. Each section will be scored from 1-5 with 5 being the highest score.

Grant Application Scoring

Grant Section	Score
A description of how the organization or school will participate in the program with a timeline of all activities	1-5 points
Program Goal(s) should utilize the SMART Goal Framework	1-5 points
Parent Engagement should include a description of the activity and what outcomes are expected from the activity	1-5 points
Outreach activity should include a description of activity and what outcomes are expected from the activity	1-5 points
A list of all project partners including all school and community setting partners who will be assisting in success of the program	1-5 points
Proposed timeline for implementing the program and evaluation should include when the lessons will be taught and the steps you will take to make sure all evaluations will be completed. Please provide a timeline of activities including the three data collection points.	1-5 points
Proposed budget and budget narrative should include overhead for school, instructor incentive, summer school participation, and outreach event(s). Please review the section on acceptable uses of funding for guidance.	1-5 points

This program is supported and funded by:



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Mental Health, Developmental
Disabilities and Substance Use Services
NC Problem Gambling Program

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