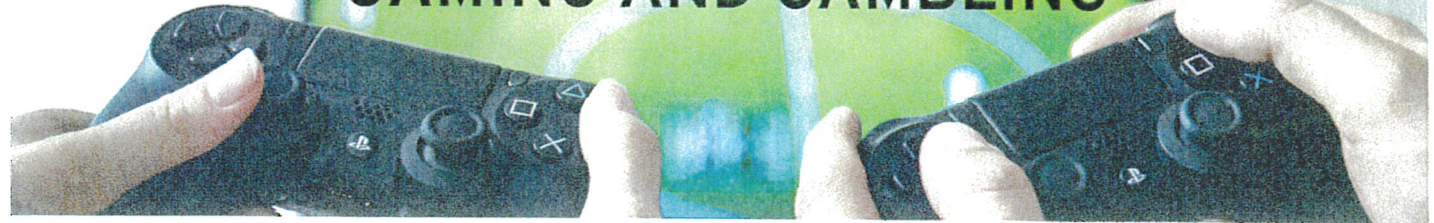# THE CONVERGENCE OF GAMING AND GAMBLING

A major concern when it comes to youth addiction to gambling is the convergence of gaming and gambling. Many games now include gambling features and many gambling activities have gaming-like features.

Games that include gambling-like features are most concerning. Unfortunately, these gaming sites are both very accessible and unregulated. They include social casino gambling, which is considered gambling without risking money. However, these sites typically include virtual currency, and thus can be seen as a "training ground" for future gambling with real money when participants are of age.

An example of gambling-like gaming is a video game that features mini-games one can bet on in a simulated casino. There are also many opportunities to participate in social casino games through social media.

Another example of "gambling" is a video game that features loot boxes, where players can spend money for access to unknown game features. According to Gambling Research Exchange Ontario, free gambling-like games are now more popular than online gambling for money. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the number of people who bet on different outcomes of video games.

Studies show that young adults and adults who are exposed to these types of games may be more likely to develop gambling problems.

Electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are gambling devices that offer a variety of games. They may have the same theme as popular television game shows. EGMs are found at casinos, on cruise boats, at racetracks, at local bars, and even at corner stores. EGMs may have an element of skill or a feature that makes it seem that skill plays a role. Researchers believe that features such as these help to attract young participants and keep them gambling.

Today's youth are the first generation to grow up with electronic gambling, such as video poker and video slots. Electronic gambling is considered to be the most addictive type of gambling because games can be played rapidly, there's easy access to money (through credit cards), the activity takes place in isolation and there is no potential for human intervention to monitor the gambler's behavior.

Evidence shows that the age group most affected by gaming disorder is adults between the ages of 25-40. However, given that this is a relatively new platform and online access is far more readily available today than just ten years ago, monitoring minors' activities in gaming and creating appropriate prevention messaging will be important.

Children and teens have little awareness that regularly partaking in these types of activities may lead to problem gambling issues later in life. In fact, most individuals, whether minors or adults, have little awareness that these unregulated sites are, in fact, designed to be more predatory than regulated sites.

World Health Organization

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION NOTES GAMING DISORDER

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). This revision included a statement regarding gaming behavior as follows:

Gaming disorder is defined as a pattern of gaming behavior ("digital-gaming" or "video-gaming") characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behavior pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.

The inclusion of gaming disorder in ICD-11 follows the development of treatment programs for people with health conditions identical to those characteristic of gaming disorder in many parts of the world, and will result in the increased attention of health professionals to the risks of development of this disorder and, accordingly, to relevant prevention and treatment measures.

Note: The WHO's definition of gaming disorder intentionally omits games that have gambling elements built in.

RECOVERING VIDEO GAMER ADDICT CREATES SUPPORT COMMUNITY FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PLAYERS

Cam Adair

Cam Adair, a video gamer in recovery, has made his life's purpose to prevent others from reaching the same depths as he did. Cam's life took a dramatic turn at the age of 11 when he began to experience intense bullying, leading him to drop out of high school and escape into gaming. He never graduated, and while all of his friends were off to college, Cam was playing video games up to 16 hours a day. Struggling with depression he reached rock bottom when he wrote a suicide note, and it was this night when he made a commitment to change.

INTENTA

The stated goal of INTENTA is to equip mental health professionals with resources on digital disorders to empower an intentional digital culture. It provides internationally accredited training that covers a comprehensive overview of problem and disordered gaming, allowing mental health professionals to understand the context, dynamics, mechanisms and special issues that present with gaming clients.

According to INTENTA's website, professionals lack the tools and training to effectively screen clients, which greatly increases the risk of misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment. Without training, professionals cannot effectively communicate nor relate to clients who engage primarily in digital spaces.

Distraught family members of loved ones with gaming issues may seek help from mental health professions, who lack the training to assess and counsel families to provide effective interventions. Without comprehensive education, these professionals can cause harm by making ineffective and counterproductive interventions.

Another challenge is the rapid rate of change and evolution in video game technology. INTENTA helps professionals stay current with ever-increasing game innovations and their client's struggles.

After completing the INTENTA training, professionals will:

- Improve quality of care and reduce potential risk of harm for clients
- Understand the psychology of gaming and recent innovation trends
- Have validated screening tools to identify at-risk clients
- Be able to implement practical strategies for prevention, treatment and recovery
- Be a valuable source of knowledge among their colleagues
- Be an internationally recognized specialist in gaming disorder

For more information about INTENTA, visit intenta.digital.

Game Quitters

Game Quitters is the world's largest support community for video game addiction, which currently serves members in 95 countries.

The Game Quitters website (gamequitters.com) provides a wealth of information, including more than 200 videos about video gaming addiction and a list of ideas to replace gaming. The site also provides an addiction test for gamers, lists of resources and support groups, and other information to help those with a video game addiction as well as parents and concerned others.
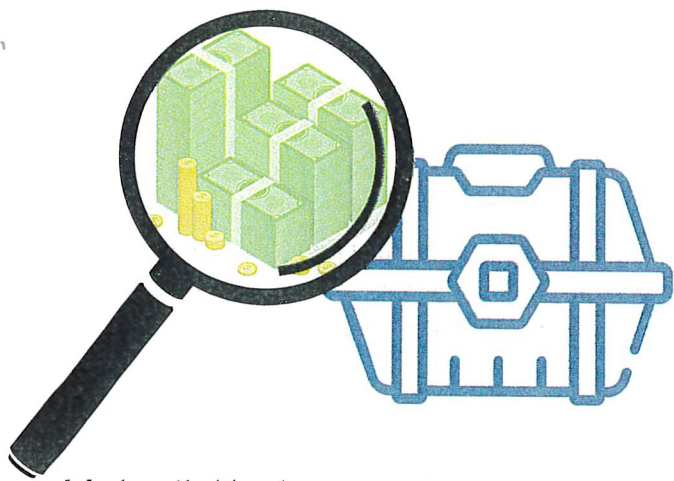

TIPS FROM CAM ADAIR TO PARENTS

Cam Adair, in recovery from gaming disorder, provides some tips to help prevent gaming from becoming an addiction. He says its important to focus on maintaining key protective factors in the family, such as having a diversity of hobbies and interests (so gaming doesn't become the only thing they do to fulfill their needs). He also encourages supporting well-being habits, such as sleep hygiene and physical activity, and to be consistent in your boundaries and limits.

As a gamer begins to play more excessively they will do all they can to increase the amount of time they can play. One strategy a gamer will implement is to remove barriers or obstacles that occupy time they *could* be gaming. They will stop doing sports, lose interest in other activities, manipulate your emotions and become the most effective lawyers in town to argue for maximum gaming time.

Stand strong and be firm in the values you hold for your family. It's a lot easier to prevent gaming from becoming a problem than it is to turn the situation around once it's become one.

For additional support and key strategies for both prevention and intervention, refer to the Reclaim Family Program (GameQuitters.com/reclaim/)

PERSPECTIVE ON LOOT BOXES

A feature that has become part of the majority of popular video games threatens to become a gateway to problem gambling: loot boxes. Loot boxes are consumable virtual items in video games that can be redeemed to receive a randomized selection of further virtual items, or loot, ranging from simple customization options for a player's avatar or character, to game-changing equipment such as weapons or armor.

Loot boxes are extremely profitable for video game companies. Payments are made through micro-transactions that may involve box purchases of 99 cents. However, repeated purchases of loot boxes can quickly escalate into thousands of dollars of purchases over time.

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) believes that many games with loot box systems already meet criteria for gambling, as players who make purchases of these boxes don't know if the item they seek will actually be in the box.

Some loot boxes that have the same or similar characteristics of slot machines may not meet legal definitions of gambling but carry the same risks for addiction.

A legal definition of gambling is not required for a feature like a loot box to cause harm. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and ICD (International Classification of Diseases) clinical criteria for gambling disorder do not require that rewards be "real money" or preclude a diagnosis if the client played with virtual coins or received several free plays before spending excessive amounts of time and money purchasing loot boxes.

Factors common to many loot boxes and slot machines:

- random distribution of prizes
- variable value of the prizes
- visual and sound cues associated with participation and reward trigger urges to play along with increased excitement and faster play

Consequences of gambling problems:

- financial harm
- emotional difficulties
- poor work or school performance
- poor mental and physical health
- higher rates of depression and substance abuse

Strong regulation is important, but it cannot be effective at reducing harm unless accompanied by equally robust prevention, education, treatment, recovery and research.

NCPG recommends addressing concerns around loot boxes and addiction with a multi-layered approach to users, parents, and communities to ensure an appropriate range of protections is put into place for youth and other vulnerable populations.

Key initiatives should include:

- creating better informed consumers
- preventing gambling-related problems
- encouraging treatment-seeking
- supporting recovery
- increasing research to enable evidence-based solutionss

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Why belong to the Alliance?

NPGA is stronger in voice and it affirms the value of our work. Gambling disorder is a real and destructive addiction. Our work is not about prohibition, but to ensure those negatively impacted have available resources for recovery and to minimize the risks for all. Better informed consumers make better choices. More members equal greater credibility with decision makers. Visit our membership page at Northstarpg.org/membership.

PLATINUM

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Minnesota Indian Gaming Association

GOLD

Canterbury Park

Treasure Island Casino

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Minnesota State Lottery

SILVER

Project Turnabout