

School Casino Nights and Fundraising Activities: Concerns and Effective Alternatives

What's the big deal about having a casino night?

In an effort to make alcohol-free events attractive to teens, well-meaning communities often offer casino nights and other gambling-related events as replacement activities. An Oregon study showed that one in 25 teens (4%) already have a gambling problem, and an additional 15 percent are considered "at risk." Youth who gamble excessively are prone to problems in school, work, and with peer and family relationships. Those who take gambling too far may commit crimes to finance their gambling, are more at risk for alcohol and drug abuse, and are much more likely to commit suicide.

But these events are harmless compared with kids drinking or using drugs.

As with alcohol and substance abuse, accessibility, availability, and acceptability are key factors in increasing the rate of youth gambling and associated problems. The reality is that there is little difference between an addiction to a substance and an addiction to gambling; the consequences are often every bit as devastating.

Yes, but the students aren't even exchanging real money!

This of this: would you consider holding a mock-tail party for kids where non-alcoholic umbrella drinks and near-beer is served? Probably not, because it gives kids the wrong message. The same is true for casino nights or other school organized gambling activities. Even while real money isn't being used, casino nights or other gambling-related activities and fundraisers promote a behavior that is dangerous and sends the wrong message that gambling is risk free.

So how can we still have a successful event AND attract the kids?

Students and parents have offered us a number of suggestions that would be both effective and FUN. These alternatives include, but aren't limited to:

- Movie night theme
- Video game night theme
- Board game night theme
- Mardi Gras theme
- Fear Factor theme
- Amazing Race theme
- Whodunit mystery night
- Survivor theme
- Athletic center activities (swimming, racquetball, Sumo wrestling, etc.)
- Silent auction (for fundraisers)
- "The Bachelor" theme / date auction (for fundraisers)
- Game tournaments (e.g., dodge ball, flag football, other games; for fundraisers)

Have suggestions or would like further information?

Contact us!

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Thank you very much for your consideration on this important issue.

We know it is a challenge to plan successful, fun events - and appreciate your dedication to the health and well being of the students!

