

The WAGER, Vol 6(33) - Second International Think Tank of Youth Gambling

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Recognizing that children today are gambling in unprecedented numbers and might be at higher risk for developing problematic gambling behaviors than many adults, on May 4-6, McGill University's International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High Risk Behaviors and the Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions co-sponsored the Second International Think Tank on Youth Gambling. The primary goals of the meeting were to emphasize youth gambling as a public health issue, to identify and define critical issues surrounding youth gambling, and to encourage participants of the think tank to engage in follow-up activity on those issues. Sixty-three individuals from nine countries identified six primary areas of concern.

A summary of the goals set for each of the primary concerns and the series of actions required to achieve those goals is provided below. A complete summary report can be obtained from the McGill University International Centre for Youth Gambling or from The Division on Addiction's web site.

2nd International Think Tank on Youth Gambling Issues

Primary Concerns	Goals and Action Steps
Definitions	Develop universal definitions of "youth", "gambling", "problem", and "normal or responsible gambling". Review legal definitions, scientific literature, and consult with both youth and health policy seekers. Identify the types of gambling activity in which youths typically engage. Assess the quality of instruments that measure youth gambling.

Awareness	<p>Increase public awareness of youth gambling as a public health issue.</p> <p>Evaluate current level of public awareness. Conduct awareness campaign in print, broadcast, and electronic media. Evaluate impact of campaign efforts.</p>
Funding	<p>Define appropriate levels of funding for research and obtain firm commitments from stakeholders to support research.</p> <p>Establish an international task force on youth gambling that would seek advice, consultation, and funding from established organizations such as the World Health Organization and others. Develop promotion strategy to support a broad funding base.</p>
Governance	<p>Develop international governance structure.</p> <p>Form a public database for youth gambling. Include stakeholders in policy decisions. Increase dissemination of science-based information on youth gambling. Reduce youth exposure to legal gambling venues.</p>
Research	<p>Highlight research in four main areas: comorbidity, differences among demographic groups, impact of media, impact of accessibility.</p> <p>Begin literature reviews, cross-sectional studies, and longitudinal research within 6 months after the think tank.</p>
Youth Involvement	<p>Encourage greater youth involvement in international programs.</p> <p>Review literature concerning youth involvement in the development of other addictions programs, include youth consultants in program planning, and assess ethnic differences for potential program impact.</p>

The think tank was a good forum for bringing youth gambling to the forefront of public health issues. Further, the think tank provided scholars, stakeholders, and policy experts with the opportunity to develop a common language for discussing youth gambling issues. The importance of this cannot be overestimated in a relatively new and rapidly growing field. However, at this early stage in the field's development, reaching an international consensus on such issues may be premature and difficult. Obstacles can hinder the attainment of some of the identified goals. For example, some stakeholders (e.g. youths, educators, certain gaming industries, healthcare representatives) might have been under or over-represented, thereby exerting undue influence on the process and objectives. This circumstance could lead to unanticipated problems as workers try to develop an international consensus. This, however, should not overshadow the praiseworthy efforts of the diverse group of participants seeking to take action on this pressing

issue.

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