

# The North Carolina Stacked Deck Program: SFY 2017

## OVERVIEW

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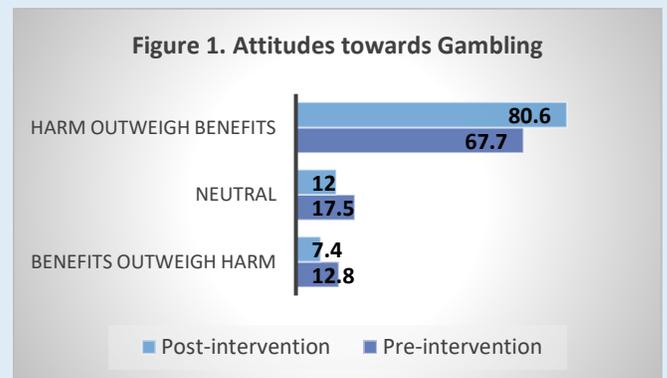
Stacked Deck is the only evidence-based program that has been found to be effective in preventing and reducing the risk of problem gambling among teens and young adults. First implemented by North Carolina in 2011, the program is aimed at changing problem gambling attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and practices through a curriculum consisting of five to six sessions. A total of 2,569 middle and high school students from 15 Boys and Girls Clubs and community organizations, 6 middle schools, 18 high schools and two schools with a mix of middle school and high school students participated in the program in SFY 2017. Students were given tests before and after their participation in the Stacked Deck Curriculum. The results shown below are obtained from the sample of 1,179 middle school and high school students who took both the pre-test and the post-test.

## ATTITUDE TOWARD GAMBLING BECAME MORE NEGATIVE

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Students were asked about the benefit or harm that gambling has for society. The majority (67.7%) thought that the harm that came from gambling outweighed its benefits prior to their participation in the Stacked Deck Curriculum. The percentage increased to 80.6 percent after the students took the curriculum. The percentage who thought that the benefits of gambling outweighed its harm went down from 12.8 percent to 7.4 percent (Figure 1). The average attitude score increased from 3.90 before intervention to 4.31 after intervention (with higher scores indicating more negative attitudes towards gambling). The change in

attitude was highly significant ( $t = 10.544$ ;  $df = 1,136$ ; 2-tailed significance = .000).



## PARTICIPANTS BECAME MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT GAMBLING

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With their participation in the Stacked Deck Curriculum, middle school and high school students increased their knowledge about gambling. They learned that gambling can be addictive, that hitting the jackpot does not always make the winner happier, and that teenagers and youth in their 20s have the highest rates of problem gambling. Knowledge scores increased between post-test and pre-test from a mean of 5.93 before participation to 7.42 after. The change was statistically significant ( $t = 20.753$ ;  $df = 974$ ; 2-tailed significance = .000).

## PARTICIPANTS BECAME MORE RESISTANT TO FALSE GAMBLING BELIEFS

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Many people who gamble tend to hold beliefs that certain values, attitudes, and behaviors increase the probability of winning. For instance, they believe that small convenience stores in rural areas have a higher probability of winning a jackpot or that a certain combination of numbers is more likely to win than others. With their participation in the Stacked Deck Curriculum, participants became more resistant to gambling fallacies. Total belief scores significantly increased from a mean of 5.73 for the pre-test to a mean of 7.07 for the post-test ( $t = 18.945$ ;  $df = 1,060$ ; 2-tailed significance = .000).

## DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS IMPROVED

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The Stacked Deck Curriculum taught students about risk-taking behavior in general and the risks associated with gambling in particular, the barriers to good decision-making and problem-solving, and strategies to overcome barriers. The percentages who reported analyzing their choices and weighing the consequences of their behaviors almost all of the time or most of the time increased from 37.5 percent before their participation in the program to 43.7 percent after.

## GAMBLING BEHAVIORS DECREASED

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Participants were asked about the number of times they gambled in the past three months.

They were also asked whether they experienced serious problems such as stress or anxiety, arguments with friends or family, worries about money, health, and the law, or problems associated with gambling at school, or work (all indicators of problem gambling). All measures of gambling behaviors decreased after participation as shown in Figure 2.



*For more information about the program, please contact Smith Worth at 919 733 0696 or at [smith.worth@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:smith.worth@dhhs.nc.gov) or Alison Drain at 919 800 8482 or at [alison.drain@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:alison.drain@dhhs.nc.gov).*

