



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: J

Date: December 12, 2023

Title: First and Final Review of *Guidelines for Instruction on Problem Gambling and the Addictive Potential Thereof*

Presenter: Dr. Marcey Sorensen, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Executive Summary

[Chapter 192](#) of the 2022 Acts of Assembly added subsection D to § [22.1-206](#) of the Code of Virginia and requires that “[i]nstruction concerning gambling and the addictive potential thereof shall be provided by the public schools as prescribed by the Board of Education [“Board”].”

In fulfillment of this requirement, the proposed Board guidance to school divisions for this topic includes instruction on how to recognize symptoms of problem gambling, prevent risky youth gambling and risky youth gaming, along with terminology, definitions, and resources to provide broad-based support and educate teachers and parents or guardians about problem gambling and the addictive potential thereof.

The goals of the proposed *Guidelines for Instruction on Problem Gambling and the Addictive Potential Thereof* (“Guidelines”) are to prevent potential addiction and to avoid tragic outcomes that may occur for individuals who begin gambling young, and for educators to proactively engage in preventative measures that can support children towards choosing options other than gambling by extending prevention education efforts aimed at alcohol, tobacco, drug use and antisocial behaviors to youth gambling by encouraging school-based life skills training and providing actionable recommendations for optimizing health literacy, empowering teachers, encouraging collaborative supports, and implementing evidence-based culturally responsive instructional resources aligned with the *Health Education Standards of Learning*. Moreover, the

proposed Guidelines recognize the central role of the teacher and parents and were developed in consultation with educators, behavioral health professionals, and other subject matter experts.

This item supports Priority 1 of the Board’s Comprehensive Plan to provide high-quality learning environments for all students by providing a framework for prevention approaches that focus on risk and protective factors as well as enhancing social and personal competence skills that empower students to achieve health and wellness throughout their lives.

Action Requested

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the Guidelines.

Rationale for Action

The Guidelines are required by statute, and school divisions cannot comply with state law until they are approved.

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority

This legislative directive is one component of the broader charge to the Board to strengthen substance abuse and addiction prevention learning experiences and life skills training for school-age children and youth. Section [22.1-206](#) of the Code of Virginia requires the following:

- A. Instruction concerning drugs and drug abuse shall be provided by the public schools as prescribed by the Board of Education.

- B. Instruction concerning the public safety hazards and dangers of alcohol abuse, underage drinking, and drunk driving shall be provided in the public schools. The Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority shall provide educational materials to the Department of Education. The Department of Education shall review and shall distribute such materials as are approved to the public schools.

- C. The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth shall develop and the Department of Education shall distribute to each local school division educational materials concerning the health and safety risks of using tobacco products, nicotine vapor products, and alternative nicotine products, as such terms are defined in § [18.2-371.2](#). Instruction concerning the health and safety risks of using tobacco products, nicotine vapor products, and alternative nicotine products, as such terms are defined in § [18.2-371.2](#), shall be provided in each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth, consistent with such educational materials.

- D. Instruction concerning gambling and the addictive potential thereof shall be provided by the public schools as prescribed by the Board.

Research shows that problem gambling co-occurs with other risky behaviors for children and adolescents, including smoking, alcohol use, and drug use. While typically thought of as an adult issue, there are several ways that youth under the age of 18 might engage in gambling, including online gambling, social gambling, illegal street gambling, and video games with gambling elements. With regards to online and video game gambling, there are several types of games on mobile apps that could potentially foster gambling addiction in children. These games are not considered to be the same as traditional gambling; however, they can still be addictive and harmful, especially for youth in their formative years and may include games with loot boxes, casino-style games, social casino games, and games with in-app advertisements. As gaming and gambling become more normalized in American society, it is important to keep in mind that a percentage of youth in Virginia will experience problems.

Stakeholder Engagement

The proposed Guidelines were developed in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and refined and amplified during a series of meetings with teachers, subject matter experts, and representatives from higher education.

Implementation and Communication

Following Board approval, the Guidelines will be submitted to Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period, pursuant to the Administrative Process Act.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources

The administrative impact and any other cost associated with the development and dissemination of the proposed *Guidelines for Instruction on Problem Gambling and the Addictive Potential Thereof* will be absorbed within existing resources.