

Tips for Service Providers: Child and Youth Problematic Gaming

Gaming can be a fun way for youth to entertain themselves, to interact with friends, and to problem solve. Most gaming is done in a safe and balanced way, but has the potential to become problematic. Here are some ways to interact with youth and their families:

- Review the Gaming section of “Growing up Online: A Toolkit for Service Providers Working with Children, Youth and Families Experiencing Problematic Use of Digital Technology.”
- Create a positive, client-focused interaction with the youth and their family that is welcoming and non-judgmental.
- If professionally appropriate, use the screening and assessment tools in the Gaming section of the Growing up Online Toolkit. This will help you understand the level of problematic use.
- Provide the family and youth with the tip sheets and resources available at MyHealthAlberta [Growing up Online](#).
- Create a treatment plan; it can include therapy modalities such as cognitive behavioural therapy, stress management, relapse prevention, self-regulation/coping skills, and trauma-informed care.
- If you are not providing screening, assessment or treatment, but feel that further intervention is needed, refer clients and their families to AHS Youth Addiction Services at 1-866-332-2322 (toll free within Alberta) or to another qualified professional.

A youth might say:	You might say:
I don't want to set any limits on my gaming. I don't care about being tired or missing out on other things.	Your brain can become addicted to gaming. It is important that you spend time enjoying other parts of your life, or your brain can stop feeling good emotions when you are not gaming. This might be why you don't care about those other things in your life.
I love gaming and I don't want to stop.	Tell me some of the good things about gaming. This helps to break down defensiveness and will give you valuable information as to why they need to game. Oftentimes, youth will go on to say some of the negative effects without prompting.
My parents are just mean and unfair	It is hard when you want to do something, but your parents don't let you. Why do you think they are so worried about your gaming? This allows you to partner with the youth and also discover some of the reasons parents are showing concern.