CHAIRPERSON JAMES: We will start with Doctor Randy Stinchfield.

DR. STINCHFIELD: Good morning. Thank you for inviting us. We're going to be speaking on youth and adolescent gambling and one of the issues that we look at is what are the signs of problems. And David Letterman has offered suggested signs of that and I'd like to read a few of those. These are signs your kid is addicted to gambling.

"Number 5, he has converted the hamster's treadmill into a crude roulette wheel. Number 4, he knows the Vegas odds on where Waldo might be. Number 3, there's a bookie sleeping in his tree house. Number 2, he's changed his middle name to 'The Greek', and number 1, he's nine and he's dating a show girl". So that's a humorous account of signs to look for and we're going to be dealing with the more serious ones now.

I'd like to first start with just looking at the context in which youth gambling occurs. I think that's a good place to start. And gambling, as you know, is now legal in all but two states in the U.S. There's also been the creation of new lotteries that have come across the country and new casinos. Estimates of wagers for the entire country were about 300 billion in 1991 and more current estimates are around 500 billion. Gambling advertising is present on television, radio, newspaper, billboards, et cetera.

These gambling advertisements entice the public with a message that gambling is a quick and easy way to get rich. Newspaper ads show pictures of winners with the by-line, "This could be you." Of course, advertisements do not show the masses
of people who lose their money gambling. It is unknown what
effect this exposure will have on youth. Some youth may not
understand the inherent risks of gambling and the low probability
of winning and, therefore, may be more susceptable than adults to
this type of promotion.

Gambling has become a common activity for many
Americans. It is estimated that about 80 percent of the U.S.
population gambles. Gambling is also a very common activity
among youth. Most studies show that about 80 percent of youth
have gambled in their life and about 60 percent have gambled in
the past year. The public seems to be either divided or unsure
of whether gambling is a good thing or a bad thing.

For example, in Minnesota when the state lottery was
put to popular vote, it passed by just a slim margin, so you
essentially have almost half who are not wanting legalized
gambling. The ambiguity regarding gambling is also apparent in
state government. On the one hand, youth are instructed by their
teachers and ostensibly their state departments of education that
the way to get ahead in life is to study and work hard. On the
other hand, their state lottery tells them they only need to be
lucky.

So now what are our concerns about gambling? With
the growth of commercial gambling, there has also been increasing
concern about the negative social and personal consequences of
easy access to a variety of gambling venues. There is a good
deal of concern about underage gambling and youth problem
gambling. This is the first generation of youth to be exposed to
easy access to a variety of gambling venues, widespread gambling
advertising and a general social approval for an inherently risky activity that was once prohibited.

There have been both national and local media reports of problems associated with youth gambling; for example, students acting as bookies in schools, adolescent gamblers getting in debt with bookies with subsequent threats and acts of violence, adolescent boys who are arrested for breaking and entering homes for the purpose of supporting their gambling habit to name a few.

So now what do we know about youth gambling? There are a number of recurring findings that cut across studies and serve as a foundation upon which to build our knowledge base. Youth gambling occurs on a continuum of involvement from kids who don't gamble at all to those who experiment, to those who gamble occasionally, to those who have a regular habit all the way to those who are over-involved and become preoccupied and also suffer serious adverse consequences. So that's the range of gambling.

Most youth have gambled at some time and many under-age youth have played a legalized game. Although many youth gamble, most do so infrequently and do not suffer any adverse consequences. It's also a finding that comes across in most studies that boys are much more involved in gambling than girls. Older youth gamble more often than younger youth. And some studies have found racial ethnic differences in youth gambling with some ethnic minorities showing higher rates of gambling than whites.

Youth start gambling at an early age, often times in grade school. Rates of youth gambling and problem gambling
appear to be fairly stable. There is a small percentage of youth who appear to be over-involved with gambling and some show signs of pathological gambling.

Prevalence rates of pathological gambling are reportedly higher among youth than adults. Dewey Jacobs estimated from his review that four to six percent of youth have serious gambling problems and Shaffer and Hall in their recent review give a similar estimate of between four to seven percent of youth have serious gambling problems.

Youth gambling is also related to other behaviors including use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana, anti-social behaviors and parental gambling. Youth gambling starts earlier than use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. I'd like to focus on the question of whether youth are gambling more or less or about the same. There have been three studies that have looked at this question; two in Minnesota and one in Texas. And in summary it appears that youth gambling has remain fairly stable in the general population.

However, there does appear to be an increase in play of legalized games for youth who turn 18 years old and an increase in the number of youth particularly males, who are over-involved in gambling. Therefore, the answer to the question are youth gambling more or less or about the same, is that for most youth it is about the same and for the small percent that we're talking about, that does seem to be increasing.

So now what we don't know about youth gambling; public health officials, policy makers, parents and teachers want to know the extent of under-age and problem gambling and what
can be done to prevent it. The field of youth gambling research is in its infancy. There are a number of gaps in our knowledge about youth gambling and so some of the questions that we are looking at addressing are why do youth have reported rates of problem and pathological gambling four times the rate of adults? This isn't the case in alcohol and drug abuse, so it's peculiar that it is the case in gambling.

Will youth gambling increase, decrease or remain stable over time? The studies that I mentioned earlier only looked at two points in time and it will be important to continue to monitor kids, particularly since this is the first generation of youth to be exposed to this. It will be important to monitor them over longer periods of time. The other question is why do youth gamble and when we asked kids about that they have different reasons. Some kids gamble to have fun. Some gamble because they're bored.

At the more serious end, kids are gambling to avoid thinking about their other serious problems in their lives, like family problems. The other question is, why does an individual move from being a social recreational gambler to becoming a pathological gambler and then do prevention efforts work?

So in terms of what needs to be done next, I would suggest that we need to develop reliable and valid screening, assessment and diagnostic instruments specifically for youth. So far what we've done is we've taken adult instruments and adapted them for kids and that practice is questionable. And so we need to develop instruments specifically for kids.
Another thing we need to do is to monitor gambling and pathological gambling among youth similar to the way that alcohol and drug use is monitored by the University of Michigan for NIDA (ph) where on a regular interval graduating seniors are assessed for their level of alcohol and drug use and so we have a very nice picture of trends in the country and it would be very helpful to have that for youth.

We also need longitudinal studies to determine the causes of youth problem gambling. We need to develop and evaluate prevention programs targeted for specific gambling types of youth. For example, youth who are already involved in gambling will likely require a different prevention message than the general population. And finally, we need to develop a continuum of care for those youth with gambling problems, including screening, assessment, referral, intervention, treatment, after care and support groups. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.