



PRESS RELEASE

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Scratchers® Aren't Toys

California Lottery Urges Players to Gift Responsibly This Holiday Season

SACRAMENTO – It's an early morning in California and there are a few people in a convenience store somewhere in the state. A young woman approaches the counter and asks to buy a California Lottery game. When asked for her ID, she admits she isn't carrying one, and the clerk asks her age. When the answer is "seventeen," the clerk politely but firmly refuses to sell the game. Every year, across the state, this scenario plays out regularly, as the California Lottery employs underage decoys to ensure retailer compliance with the prevention of sales to minors.

Lottery Tickets Aren't Child's Play

As we enter the holiday shopping season, the California Lottery reminds players to gift responsibly. Lottery tickets are not toys or appropriate stocking stuffers for anyone under the age of 18. According to the [National Council on Problem Gambling](#), research supports that early exposure to or participation in gambling during childhood is highly correlated with the development of a gambling problem later in life. Gambling exposure during childhood is often through a lottery product, such as lottery tickets or scratch offs. Often these items are given to a child by an adult who is unaware of the associated risks.

"Our games are meant to spread fun and joy, especially our holiday-themed



Advertising from the California lottery's 2025 Gift Responsibly Campaign.



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Scratchers® games. Keeping that in mind, the California Lottery works diligently to prevent underage gambling through our retailers and prevention programs, and we ask that our players join us in that commitment to promote responsible gifting during this holiday season and year-round,” said California Lottery spokesperson, Daniel Kelly.

As an active participant in the 2025 Gift Responsibly Campaign organized by the [National Council on Problem Gambling](#), the California Lottery is committed to responsible gaming. In February 2015, the California Lottery became the first lottery in the nation to receive a [World Lottery Association \(WLA\) Responsible Gaming Level Four Certification](#), the highest certification available and has maintained that certification for over a decade now.

“Youth gambling is a growing risk that too often goes overlooked. The Gift Responsibly Campaign plays a vital role in helping families and communities understand the importance of keeping lottery products out of kids’ hands,” said Derek Longmeier, President of NCPG’s Board of Directors. “We’re grateful to the California Lottery for joining this effort and working to expand education and awareness to protect young people from gambling-related harm.”

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The mission of the California Lottery is to raise additional funding for public education, helping to supplement school budgets for K-12 as well as colleges and universities. The California Lottery has raised more than \$48 billion for public schools through the responsible sale of its games since 1985. Lottery funding for schools is largely discretionary, so administrators and educators can use Lottery money for instructional programs and services they may not otherwise afford. The California Lottery features eight [draw games](#) and dozens of new instant [Scratchers](#) games each year. More than 95% of California Lottery sales revenue goes back to the community in the form of prize payments, [retailer commissions and bonuses](#), and contributions to education. More information about who benefits can be found [here](#). As jackpots rise, the California Lottery would like to remind players that gambling should be fun. Borrowing money to play, spending above a person’s budget, or using money intended for other purposes can ultimately lead to significant problems for players and their families. If a player recognizes that they have a gambling problem or if someone knows of someone who may have a problem, the Lottery recommends calling the California Problem Gambling Help Line at 1-800-GAMBLER.

About the National Council on Problem Gambling

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) is neutral on legalized gambling. Based in Washington DC, NCPG is the only national nonprofit organization that seeks to minimize the economic and social costs associated with gambling addiction. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, contact the National Problem Gambling Helpline™, which offers hope and help without stigma or shame. Call 1-800-522-4700, text 800GAM, or visit www.ncpgambling.org/chat. Help is available 24/7 – it is free and confidential.



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