

Gambling and your workplace

How to identify gambling harm
and support your employees



GAMBLE AWARE
gambleaware.nsw.gov.au
1800 858 858



How to support staff who have issues with gambling

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Why gambling is a workplace issue

Did you know that many people with gambling issues report losing time from work or study as a result of gambling? Many reported that gambling affects their work in performance and attendance. It is estimated that gambling in NSW costs employers billions through embezzlement alone and this is a issue that employers can't afford to ignore.

Fraud is relatively common among people with gambling issues with gambling related crime being more widespread amongst white collar workers. Gambling related crime includes embezzlement and misappropriated funds. Employee fraud costs NSW employers millions annually and this does not take into account unreported or undiscovered incidents, so the true cost to employers is likely to be much higher. Gambling has a wide range of other impacts, including:

- negative publicity and associated diminished customer confidence
- diversion of management and staff time
- expenses for recovering money and increase in insurance premiums
- emotional impact on colleagues due to broken trust.

Gambling harm is a social, health and workplace-safety issue. However, unlike other dependency issues like alcohol or drug abuse, it can be hard to see the signs and symptoms. This can make it difficult for colleagues and employers to identify an employee suffering from gambling-related harm.

With so many online and mobile gambling channels, and the shift from gambling in venues to gambling in the home and at work, gambling has enormous potential for negative impact in your workplace. The 2019 NSW Gambling Survey showed that 11% of online gamblers participated in gambling at work.



Gambling and an employer's duty of care



Workplaces have a responsibility under work health and safety (WHS) law to take reasonable care of health and safety at work, and employers have a duty of care. If you're worried about an employee or colleague's physical or psychological safety, then you need to follow your workplace's policies and procedures as to how to support them.

You can reduce the impact of gambling through HR policies by finding out what's going on in your workplace and supporting staff who may have issues.

Here are ideas on how to meet obligations to employee health and wellbeing regarding the risk of gambling harm.

Do you have a workplace gambling policy?

It might seem like common sense that gambling in the workplace is banned, but having a clear policy in place can help reduce the impact:

- Assess the risk. Take a close look at whether workplace computers and digital devices are used for gambling.
- Be proactive. Distribute responsible gambling information to your employees.
- Formalise a workplace gambling policy. What's acceptable in your workplace? Say, footy tipping and Melbourne Cup sweepstakes may be okay, but using workplace equipment to access online gambling sites is not permitted.
- Communicate. Make sure everyone knows about the policy and how to get help. Have conversations with staff about the need to be gamble aware. Provide information about help and support options.

Need help to make your workplace gamble aware?

To order materials or resources, or to ask us about developing or integrating gambling awareness into your workplace policies, contact the Office of Responsible Gambling. Email info@responsiblegambling.nsw.gov.au or call **02 9995 0992**.

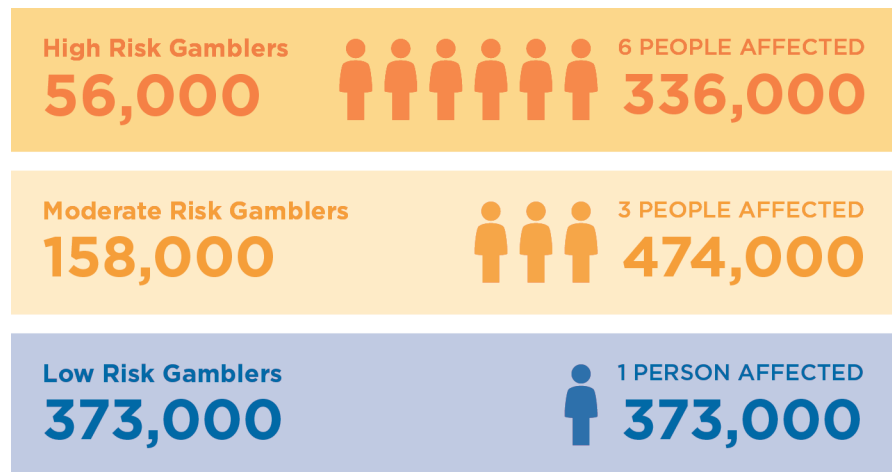
What gambling harm looks like

Gambling harm is characterised by someone having difficulties in putting a cap on the money or time they spend on gambling. This can lead to gambling harm that goes far beyond the individual.

Impacts on other people

Gambling harm doesn't just affect the person who gambles. It impacts people around the gambler, both in and outside of the workplace. It extends to family, friends, work colleagues and the community.

For every individual with a gambling issue, 5 to 10 others are affected: immediate and extended family, friends, work colleagues and employers. The result of borrowing or stealing money, lying, stress and arguments can lead to profoundly negative effects on children, debt, legal problems and relationship breakdown.



Source: NSW Gambling Survey 2019 and Goodwin et al 2017

Gambling harm can also heighten mental health issues, with individuals facing depression, anxiety, lack of sleep, stress-related illnesses such as ulcers and high blood pressure. It can even lead to suicide.

If you can identify the issues and provide support early on, you may help your employees tackle their gambling issues before they spiral out of control.

Potential warning signs

Changes in how an employee or colleague manages their time, their productivity and mood, and their financial wellbeing can all be clues to gambling harm.

Time

- They arrive at work late or leave early or take long lunch hours.
- They disappear without explaining, or they're absent more frequently.
- There's a predictable pattern to their sick leave.
- They gamble on company time (online, mobile, landline).

Productivity

- They're irritable, moody or can't concentrate.
- Their mind is on other things.
- They're not as productive, or they don't complete projects.
- They're overusing the work phone or internet.

Financial

- They're borrowing money from workmates.
- They often ask for salary advances.
- They get calls at work by companies chasing payment.
- They frequently volunteer for overtime or additional shifts to cover debts.

Criminal

- They steal money or goods from work colleagues (even intending to pay it back).
- They make fraudulent expense claims.
- They start embezzling.

Other signs

- They may avoid taking holidays, so backfill to cover their job isn't required.
- Form guides or sporting newspapers are on their desk, or they're often on betting websites.

When you see the signs

To work out exactly what's happening, you or someone else will need to have a one-on-one conversation about gambling with the employee you're worried about.

We understand this can be challenging. Plan ahead before you raise it with the staff member and consider if someone else would be better equipped than you to talk to them. Approach your HR team, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or your regional GambleAware Provider for advice on who may be the best person to have the conversation with them.

If you go ahead, here are some basic principles:

- Express facts, thoughts and feelings without placing blame.
- Use "I" not "you" statements.
- Show that you're listening.
- Be understanding.
- Plan your responses beforehand and think about how they may react.

How you might start

“I’d like to talk to you about a sensitive issue. I think it’s important for us to talk about it because I’m concerned about you.

You’re a valued employee and colleague here – that’s not going to change. But I’ve noticed you’ve seemed stressed / depressed / anxious / distracted / not yourself lately. Would you mind if I ask you some questions to find out more about your situation, and if there’s anything I can do to help?

Please know that I’ll keep your answers totally confidential.”

Questions to get the conversation going

- “How have you been feeling lately?”
- “What’s been happening in your life to make you feel that way?”
- “Can you tell me more about that?”
- “Have you ever had an issue with gambling?”

If an employee chooses to share they may have issues with gambling, consider asking some further questions.

Over the past 12 months ...

Here’s a simple Yes/No checklist. You could talk it through, but you might prefer to give your employee a copy to complete on their own.

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- | | | |
|---|---|----------|
| 1 | Have you bet more than you could afford to lose? | Yes / No |
| 2 | Have you gone back another day to try and win back the money you lost? | Yes / No |
| 3 | Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement? | Yes / No |
| 4 | Has anyone criticised you about your gambling? | Yes / No |
| 5 | Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble, or what happens when you gamble? | Yes / No |
| 6 | Has gambling caused any financial issues for you or your household? | Yes / No |
| 7 | Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble? | Yes / No |
| 8 | Has gambling caused any health problems for you – including stress and anxiety? | Yes / No |
-

If they tick Yes to any of these 8 questions, their gambling issues may be more serious.

Have you thought about talking to someone ...

Let your employee know about GambleAware and the GambleAware website. Give them the GambleAware number **1800 858 858** and encourage them to talk to a professional counsellor, free of charge, 24/7. Reassure them it's confidential. No one's going to judge them, and they have nothing to lose by talking.



What you need to know about GambleAware

GambleAware is funded by the Responsible Gambling Fund on behalf of the NSW Government. Our aim is to work towards zero gambling-related harm, through research, education and support for individuals and communities.

All our services have a common goal: to help people understand and overcome gambling harm, and to provide support, advice and encouragement as they do so.

We're here for you and your employees

We're here to support anyone in NSW impacted by gambling, and that includes you. Contact us if you want to know more about how to give the right support and advice to your employees or colleagues.

- If you're affected by a gambling-related issue or you're worried about a friend, loved one, employee or workmate, GambleAware offers free and confidential resources, counselling and professional support services - including legal assistance and financial counselling - all over the state.
- We have more counsellors and more ways to speak with them - by video chat, online chat, email and over the phone, as well as in person.
- We can provide culturally appropriate Aboriginal-specific support, and support is available in over 40 languages, including Mandarin and Cantonese, Vietnamese, Arabic and Italian. Just ask.
- GambleAware counsellors are available to talk to 24/7.

Contact GambleAware
Visit gambleaware.nsw.gov.au
Call **1800 858 858** 24/7.

GambleAware regional directory

If you have questions about GambleAware support and services available in your region, get in touch with your GambleAware Service.

GambleAware Blue Mountains & Western Sydney

Key centres include Parramatta, Penrith, Lidcombe, Blacktown, Katoomba, Lithgow, Springwood, Emerton, Richmond.

GambleAware Central Sydney

Key centres include Campsie, Belmore, Camperdown, Ashfield, Lewisham.

GambleAware Far & Western NSW

Key centres include Bathurst, Bourke, Broken Hill, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo, Orange, Walgett.

GambleAware Hunter & New England

Key centres include Cardiff, Forster, Gloucester, Maitland, Mayfield, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Taree, Armidale, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri, Tamworth.

GambleAware Illawarra & Southern NSW

Key centres include Wollongong, Shellharbour, Nowra, Ulladulla, Batemans Bay, Bega, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Cooma, Harden.

GambleAware Mid & Northern NSW

Key centres include Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Lismore, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads.

GambleAware Murrumbidgee

Key centres include Albury, Wagga Wagga, Corowa, Finley, Deniliquin, Holbrook, Glenroy.

GambleAware Northern Sydney & Central Coast

Key centres include Manly Vale, Narrabeen, Ryde, Tuggerah, West Gosford, Wyong, Toukley, San Remo.

GambleAware South Eastern Sydney

Key centres include Kogarah, Sutherland, Bondi Junction, Darlinghurst.

GambleAware South Western Sydney

Key centres include Fairfield, Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Bonnyrigg, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly.

This document was prepared with the assistance of Martin Wieczorek and Fang Zhou of the Gambling Treatment Clinic at the University of Sydney.

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Help is close at hand

No matter how you're affected by gambling – your own or someone else's – GambleAware can help. For free, confidential advice and support, and to find services near you, go to gambleaware.nsw.gov.au or call us on **1800 858 858** 24/7.

Your regional GambleAware Provider

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