

Gambling Act 2003: **Fact Sheet 32**

Problem Gambling Awareness Training

Introduction

Regulation 12 of the Gambling (Harm Prevention and Minimisation) Regulations 2004 comes into effect on 1 October 2005.

The regulation –

- Requires certain licence holders to provide problem gambling awareness training for venue staff
- Sets out the minimum that the training must enable staff to do
- States that the holder of a class 4 venue licence must make sure that there is always at least one person who has had the training in the venue whenever gambling is available at the venue.

The aim of this document is to explain the requirements, to provide you with some practical suggestions, and to explain the Department's role.

Who has to provide training?

Training must be provided by –

- Class 4 venue licensees
- Casino operator licensees.

They may provide the training themselves or they may contract external training providers to do it for them.

Who has to be trained?

Class 4 venue licensees must provide training to the venue manager and enough venue staff to ensure that there is always a trained person at the venue when gambling is available. For example, it might be appropriate to train all people who might be Duty Managers.

Casino licensees must provide training to any employee who is in direct contact with players in the course of his or her duties. This will include all gaming staff from dealers to pit managers, is likely to include security staff and casino hosts, and might also include food and beverage staff.

What does someone who has been trained have to be able to do?

The minimum training requirements are simple. We think the training should focus on giving staff the skills to do the things they have to do **safely**.

Someone who has been trained has to be able to –

- **Approach a player** that the person has reasonable grounds to believe may be experiencing difficulties related to their gambling; and
- **Provide the player with information** about –
 - The characteristics and signs of problem gambling
 - The potential risks and consequences of problem gambling
 - How to access problem gambling services; and
- **Remind the player** that –
 - The venue manager may, if he or she believes on reasonable grounds that a person is a problem gambler, ban that person from the gambling area of the venue for up to two years
 - The player can identify himself or herself as a problem gambler and request that the venue exclude them from the gambling area of the venue for up to two years.

While reasonable measures have been taken to ensure the quality and accuracy of the information contained in this Fact Sheet it does not replace information contained in the Gambling Act 2003 or the Racing Act 2003 or any provisions pursuant to these Acts. This Fact Sheet is for general information only and is not a substitute for independent, professional legal or financial advice.

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How do I safely approach someone I think seems to be having gambling-related difficulties?

You are there to provide information, not counselling. The person you are approaching may be angry, distressed, depressed or feeling vulnerable. It is therefore important that you approach with a willingness to help, and with sensitivity and respect.

Identify yourself and your position when you approach. Here is one example of what you might say to someone you think might be having problems with gambling –

“Hi, my name is *name* and I am the *title* of this venue. I couldn’t help noticing over the last *x period* of time that you seem to *describe behaviour you have observed, or comments you have heard*. By law I am required to provide you with information on gambling, including problem gambling *provide them with the required information*. Would you like me to contact anyone for you?”

Alternatively you might like to try getting the person to talk about how their gambling is affecting them, and use the opportunities that open up to provide the required information. Open-ended questions like the following could be useful:

- How do you feel about your gambling at the moment?
- How do you think your gambling has been affecting you lately?
- What kinds of things have your family or friends said to you about your gambling?

You don’t have to use these exact words. It might help if you practise different approaches with colleagues during training to find words you are comfortable with and that you think are safe. You might also like to practise how you might respond when the person you approach denies there is a problem, refuses to accept any information, or tells you to go away.

It is important that you do not get into an argument with the person you have approached, or begin to negotiate. You are there primarily to express concern and provide particular information.

What are the signs that someone may be experiencing gambling-related difficulties?

The **characteristics** and signs of problem gambling will be noted in your venue’s problem gambler identification policy.

Common signs include –

- Repeated visits to an ATM
- Attempts to borrow money on site
- Attempts to cash cheques
- Disorderly/Agitated behaviour
- Enquiries and comments from family and friends
- Long sessions (two hours or more is well above average)
- Playing more than once a week
- Children left unattended whilst their parents/carers are gambling
- Alcohol intoxication whilst gambling
- Waiting outside for the venue to open so they can start playing
- Trying to jam gaming machines to make them play automatically.

If you see any of these signs or anything else that makes you think a player’s gambling might be a problem, you must approach that person and provide them with information.

What are the potential risks and consequences of problem gambling?

The **potential risks** and consequences of problem gambling can include:

- Feelings of guilt
- Feelings of depression
- Financial problems, including debt or poverty
- Problems at work (ranging from poor performance to fraud)
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Breakdown of relationships
- Family violence and suicide.

It can affect anyone regardless of gender, wealth, age, race or ethnic group. Harm can occur at different levels for different people.

How do people access problem gambling services?

The **gambling helpline** is available on **0800 654 655**. They also have a website: www.gamblingproblem.co.nz.

Your venue may also have the numbers for local problem gambling service providers.

NOTE: You may wish to use a pamphlet to provide the person with information on the characteristics and risks of problem gambling, and how to contact a problem gambling service. Using a pamphlet can help you remember what information you need to give the person you are talking to. Your venue may already have pamphlets that contain the required information. If not, the Department of Internal Affairs has published a pamphlet on its website that you can download and use. The pamphlet is located at www.dia.govt.nz. Click on the link to *Gambling* then click on the link to *Problem Gambling*.

While you can use a pamphlet to provide people with the required information, you need to be able to understand it and talk about it with the person you have approached.

What do I have to remind people about?

You need to remind the person that –

- By law, if you continue to have concerns about the person's gambling behaviour, you can choose to exclude them from the gambling area of the venue for up to two years; and
- The person can identify himself or herself to you as a problem gambler, and ask to be excluded from the venue. You will then issue them with a self-exclusion order prohibiting them from entering the gambling area of the venue for up to two years.

Why is this important?

Gambling can be harmful, and sometimes very harmful. Sometimes the harm may result from just one gambling session. In other cases, it might be the result of regular gambling sessions over a period of time and involving substantial amounts of money.

Problem gambling is commonly associated with gaming machines and casino table games. Although the proportion of problem gamblers in the general New Zealand population is small, the proportion of regular gamblers with a gambling problem is much larger. If people play gaming machines in your venue often enough for you to notice them, there is a very good chance (more than 1 in 5) that their gambling is harming them, those around them and their community.

As a good host, it is your responsibility to take some simple steps to prevent this from happening.

How does the problem gambling awareness training in regulation 12 relate to the policy for identifying problem gamblers and the exclusion provisions in the Act?

Regulation 12 supports the harm prevention and minimisation measures already in place under the Act. It simply provides some structure, and requires some training around when to approach someone who may have a gambling problem, and what information to provide.

Under sections 308 – 312 of the Gambling Act 2003, your venue should already have a ‘problem gambler identification policy’ that provides guidance for you on how to identify actual or potential problem gamblers in your venue, and when to approach someone you consider may be having difficulty with gambling. You should be familiar with the policy and use the criteria in it to identify and approach people in your venue who may be experiencing difficulty with gambling.

Your venue should also already have guidelines for issuing exclusion orders. These guidelines will be found in your problem gambler identification policy or your harm prevention policy. You may already have issued exclusion orders since the ability to do so has been in place since July 2004. If you haven’t already done so, make yourself familiar with the guidelines for your venue. At a minimum, make sure you know or can find out the following:

- Where you can find exclusion orders
- What information you will have to obtain from the person being excluded
- How long you can issue the exclusion order for
- What records you must keep, and where the records are kept.

Someone who has completed the training required by Regulation 12 should be able to **safely** identify, and if necessary issue an exclusion order to, a player who seems to be experiencing difficulties.

Who pays for training?

Licensees should pay for providing problem gambling awareness training. In relation to class 4 venues, the Department considers that the current venue payments regime provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate training costs.

The Department does not consider that problem gambling awareness training needs to be complex or costly.

What is the Department’s role?

The Department’s role is to provide some guidelines regarding problem gambling awareness training and to ensure that venues comply with the requirements. We will continue to work with standards organisations, gambling sector groups, problem gambling service providers and the Ministry of Health to ensure that appropriate standards and guidelines are set for problem gambling awareness training.

The Department does not approve or endorse training courses, but will comment on request on whether the content of draft training courses meets the requirements of the Regulations.

Favourable comment from the Department on the content of a course does not automatically mean that a venue whose staff take this course will be deemed compliant with the Act. During its audits, compliance checks, and investigations, the Department will look carefully at compliance with the host responsibility provisions of the Act and Regulations. Checks that might be used include (but are not limited to) checks on –

- Whether the venue has trained staff in place, and whether they are on site when the gambling operation is open
- Whether the staff demonstrate an understanding of the legal requirements
- Whether the staff know common signs of possible problem gambling that a customer might demonstrate in the venue
- Whether there are procedures in place for identifying potential problem gamblers, providing information, and issuing exclusion orders.

We will take seriously possible breaches of the requirements, for example by investigating complaints about refusal or failure to issue a self-exclusion order on request.