PROBLEM GAMBLING IN THE WORKPLACE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Information for Human Resource and Employee Assistance Professionals from the MidCentral Alliance on Problem Gambling, the state councils/associations on problem gambling affiliated with the National Council on Problem Gambling in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING

Pathological gambling is a progressive disorder characterized by a continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling; a preoccupation with gambling and with obtaining money with which to gamble; irrational thinking; and a continuation of behavior despite adverse consequences.

PROBLEM GAMBLING

Problem gambling is gambling behavior that causes disruptions in any major area of life: psychological, physical, social or vocational. The term "problem gambling" is sometimes used to refer to people who do not meet the diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling but are thought to be in the early stages of a pathological gambling disorder.

Fortunately, people can recover from a gambling addiction. It all starts with self-honesty and awareness that help is available through professional counseling, Gamblers Anonymous and other resources.

MidCentral Alliance on Problem Gambling

RESOURCES

Illinois
Helpline: 1-800-522-4700
Council: Illinois Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.icpg.info

Indiana
Helpline: 1-800-9-WITH-IT (994-8448)
Council: Indiana Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.indianaproblemgambling.org

Kentucky
Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER (426-2537)
Council: Kentucky Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.kycpg.org

Michigan
Helpline: 1-800-270-7117
Council: Michigan Association on Problem Gambling
Website: www.michapg.com

Minnesota
Helpline: 1-800-333-HOPE (4673)
Council: Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance
Website: www.northstarproblemgambling.org

Ohio
Helpline: 1-800-522-4700
Council: Ohio Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.ohiocpg.org

West Virginia
Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER (426-2537)
Council: West Virginia Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.wvcpg.org

Wisconsin
Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER (426-2537)
Council: Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling
Website: www.wi-problemgamblers.org

BASIC SCREEN

A simple two-question self-test has proven to have a 95 percent or more confidence level in identifying possible pathological gambling behavior. The two questions are easy to incorporate into an intake form or employee history creating an effective screening tool for possible pathological gambling behavior.

1. **Have you ever lied about how much you gamble?**
2. **Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?**

If the employee answers "yes" to either of these questions, further investigation is warranted to determine whether the individual meets the criteria for pathological gambling in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the Mental Disorders.

WARNING SIGNS

- ☐ Showing up late for work (up late gambling and can't get up).
- ☐ Taking long lunch breaks (gambling during lunch).
- ☐ Using sick days (may be visiting gambling venues).
- ☐ Completing projects late (preoccupied with gambling, losses and wins).
- ☐ Suffering mood swings (depressed about losses).
- ☐ Refuses to take time off from work (may be covering mishandling of company funds).
- ☐ Borrowing money from co-workers.
- ☐ Taking money from the company without the company's knowledge.

While this is not an all-inclusive list, these behaviors may warrant further consideration.

WHAT TO DO NEXT
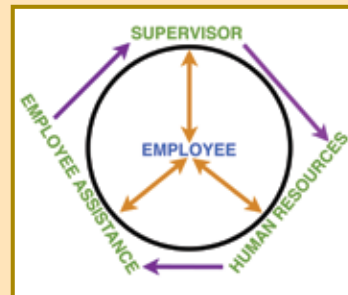
Collaboration among supervisors, human resource professionals, and employee assistance professionals is key to identifying and addressing an employee's gambling problem. Educating employers and employees about addictive gambling can help minimize the negative workplace impacts of uncontrolled gambling behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With only 23 percent of employers reporting a policy on gambling in the workplace to the Society for Human Resource Management, experts recommend:

- ☑ establishing a clear policy on workplace gambling;
- ☑ including problem gambling in company policy statements on employee health and wellness;
- ☑ ensuring the company's health insurance carrier provides coverage for the DSM-IV diagnosis of pathological gambling;
- ☑ training EAP/HR professionals to effectively help problem gamblers;
- ☑ educating supervisors on how to spot possible problem gambling behavior;
- ☑ raising awareness among employees about problem gambling behavior;
- ☑ posting signs or posters advertising gambling helplines;
- ☑ prohibiting internet gambling;
- ☑ implementing cash advance, cash receipt, travel advance, and related policies to reduce problem gamblers unaccounted access to funds; and
- ☑ examining employee flex time options, absenteeism and lateness records, time off requests, and performance evaluations for gambling-related problems.

ASSISTANCE

State councils/associations on problem gambling provide training and educational opportunities for EAP/HR professionals. Training can be customized to meet the needs of the organization. MidCentral Alliance councils/associations are listed on the back of this brochure.

WORKPLACE FACTS

- 79 percent of workplaces surveyed had betting pools or games of chance organized among employees (Society for Human Resource Management).
- 66 percent of callers to an employee assistant program admitted gambling in the workplace (Bensinger-Dupont).
- 48 percent of the callers to an employee assistance program admitted gambling negatively effects their workplace productivity (Bensinger-Dupont).

AND THAT IS JUST THOSE CALLERS WHO ADMIT IT.

Substance abuse disorders, depression, and anti-social personality disorder are significantly more likely among compulsive gamblers according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMSHA also indicated there is a strong association between suicide and pathological gambling. Multiple researchers identified domestic abuse of spouse and children as significantly higher among compulsive gamblers, as well as incidences of depression and other addictions.