

FACT SHEET

DOES SOMEONE I KNOW HAVE A GAMBLING PROBLEM?

It is not easy to identify a gambling problem, especially if you are the partner or family member of someone who may be gambling. Unlike alcohol or other drug abuse a gambling problem can often be hidden, even though you may feel that something is wrong. It is important to remember that people will not cut down or stop gambling until they believe that change is necessary.

WARNING SIGNS

Here are some warning signs that there may be a problem with gambling. If a person you know shows only one or two of these signs it may not necessarily be a gambling problem, however the more signs that are present the more likely it is to be problem gambling.

Some warning signs of a gambling problem are about money. Some indicators include:

- There is money missing from an account or wallet/purse household items and other valuables disappear
- The person borrows money, particularly more than one loan
- The person regularly lacks money for no apparent reason
- The person is secretive about money and financial records

Other warning signs may relate more to the person's behaviour. There may be a problem with gambling if the person:

- Is preoccupied with or spends a lot of time on gambling
- Is often late for commitments or there is time unaccounted for
- Shows changes in personality, sleeping, eating and sexual relationship patterns
- Becomes withdrawn from others
- Shows changed parenting behaviour - children are left alone or poorly cared for
- Is deceptive and often makes excuses reports wins but not losses
- Has unrealistic beliefs about luck and winning

If someone you know has a gambling problem there is help available. Turn over to find a Gambling Help Service near you.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If you are a partner, family member or friend of someone with a gambling problem there ARE a number of things you can do. And remember - people can overcome a gambling problem and get control back in their life.

Don't blame yourself

Remember that there are hundreds of thousands of people in Australia with a gambling problem and it is very easy to gamble. You are not responsible for the person's choices to gamble.

Plan ahead

First, it is important to work out what level of involvement you will have in dealing with the gambling problem. If you and any other family or friends are clear about the way you will be involved it is more likely that you will form a strong support network for each other as well as for the person with the problem.

Set boundaries of support

Sometimes it is easy to want to shield the person from the negative consequences of their gambling - eg paying for the person's overdue bills. However this means that the person is not facing the problem and makes it more likely that they will continue gambling. Allowing a partner, family member or friend to experience the consequences of their gambling is not easy, particularly when there are children involved. People will not cut down or stop gambling until they believe that change is necessary.

TALK TO THE PERSON WITH THE GAMBLING PROBLEM

Choose your time to talk - although there is probably never a perfect time to talk it is important that the person is able to focus on what you are saying. If they are distracted or aggressive it is unlikely they will listen and engage with you about the problem.

Be honest about how you feel - let the person know clearly how you are feeling and how the gambling problem is affecting you.

It is important for the person to understand the consequences of their gambling. It can help to use 'I' statements such as... 'I feel...' or 'I'm worried that...' rather than saying 'You must...' or 'Your problem is...'. This helps avoid statements that sound judgemental and produce a defensive reaction.

Avoid arguments - although this is not easy and you will naturally feel hurt and angry by the person's behaviour it can help to remain calm when you talk to them. Try to stick to your main points rather than getting into arguments. It can help to write down what you want to say beforehand.

Listen carefully and encourage positive change - Listen carefully to what they are saying and repeat back to them what they have said to avoid getting it wrong. This can help the person feel that they are understood and can avoid a defensive reaction. Try to focus on any positive changes that the person may have already made and let them know that people can and do get control back in their lives and repair the damage of problem gambling. Encourage the person to seek help.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Finances

- Take control of your finances and work out a budget for the household
- Do not pay the person's gambling or other debts avoid joint financial commitments with the person such as consolidation loans
- Try and limit the person's access to cash so that they have less opportunity to gamble
- Get professional help and see a financial counsellor

Safety and wellbeing

- Do not tolerate any abusive behaviour
- Have an escape plan if you are at risk of harm. For more help you can contact your local Domestic Violence agencies

Get help and support

It's very difficult to cope alone when a person close to you has a gambling problem. Gambling Help Services offer free, confidential and professional counselling and therapy to friends and family of gamblers, either individually or as a couple. Some suggestions include:

- Talk to someone you know and trust who is a good listener and will not judge you or your partner
- Talk to a trained counsellor over the phone or make an appointment to see a gambling or financial counsellor. Gambling counselling is free and available for partners, families and friends - for more information contact the services listed here
- Talk to your children and other family members as they will benefit from having the gambling problem out in the open. It is likely they will be relieved you are getting help. It is very important that kids do not feel responsible for the actions of their parents

For immediate help, call the Gambling Helpline on 1800 858 858: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also arrange a free appointment with a Gambling Help Service. Individual, couple and family counselling is available. Financial counselling is also

available to help sort out financial problems. These services are free, professional and confidential.

Visit www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au for more information.

GAMBLING HELP SERVICES

Gambling Help Services provide **FREE** and confidential counselling and assistance

METROPOLITAN SERVICES

Eastern

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8223 4566 (Adelaide)

Northern

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8250 6600 (Salisbury, Elizabeth and Ridgehaven)

Southern

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8377 5400 (Oaklands Park including Noarlunga and Aldinga outreach)

Western

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8340 2022 (Port Adelaide)
Tel: 08 8245 8100 (Hindmarsh)

COUNTRY SERVICES

Adelaide Hills

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8223 4566 (Mount Barker outreach)

Barossa

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8250 6600 (Gawler and Nuriootpa outreach)
Tel: 1800 182 325 (Country Free Call)

Eyre and Western

- UnitingCare Wesley Country SA Tel: 1300 456 946 (Whyalla and Port Lincoln)

Far North

- UnitingCare Wesley Country SA Tel: 1300 456 946 (Port Augusta)

Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8377 5400 (Victor Harbor and Kingscote outreach)
Tel: 1800 182 325 (Country Free Call)

Limestone Coast

- Lifeline South East (SA) Tel: 08 8723 2299 (Mount Gambier)

Murray Mallee

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8582 4122 (Berri, including Waikerie, Loxton and Renmark outreach)
Tel: 08 8223 4566 (Murray Bridge outreach)
Tel: 1800 182 325 (Country Free Call)

Yorke and Mid North

- UnitingCare Wesley Country SA Tel: 1300 456 946 (Port Pirie and Kadina)

TARGETED SERVICES

Aboriginal Gambling Help Services

- Flinders University Tel: 08 8182 4911 (North/West Metro)
Tel: 08 8204 6982 (Southern Metro)
- Aboriginal Family Support Services Tel: 08 8641 0907 (Port Augusta)
Tel: 08 8582 3192 (Berri)
Tel: 0418 499 649 (Murray Bridge)
Tel: 08 8683 1909 (Port Lincoln)
- Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service Tel: 08 8626 2600 (Ceduna)

Aboriginal Gambling Therapy Service

- Southern Adelaide Local Health Network Tel: 08 8204 6982 (Adelaide)

Cambodian Gambling Help Service

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8245 8100 (Hindmarsh)

Chinese Gambling Help Service

- Overseas Chinese Association Tel: 08 8445 1677 (Findon)

Vietnamese Gambling Help Service

- Community Access and Services SA Tel: 08 8447 8821 (Athol Park)

Multicultural Gambling Help Service

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8245 8100 (Hindmarsh)

Criminal Justice Gambling Help Service

- Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Service Tel: 08 8218 0700 (Adelaide)

Intensive Therapy Gambling Help Service

- SA State Intensive Gambling Help Service Tel: 08 8232 3333 (Metro/Country)

Lived Experience in Gambling Program

- Relationships Australia SA Tel: 08 8245 8100 (Hindmarsh)

Gambling Helpline

- For immediate help 24/7 free and confidential Tel: 1800 858 858

Gambling Help Online

- For 24/7 free online counselling www.gamblinghelpline.org.au

Funded through
the Gamblers
Rehabilitation Fund



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

