



Responsible Gambling Effectiveness Principles



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING COLLABORATIVE
FINAL DRAFT - NOVEMBER 2019



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES

The Responsible Gambling Collaborative was established in 2018 to chart a new course on the complex issue of responsible gambling and identify the programs and policies that best address responsible gambling, the prevention of problem gambling, and hold government accountable for supporting proven, effective solutions.

The Responsible Gambling Collaborative is pleased to present the following “Responsible Gambling Effectiveness Principles.” These principles address a simple, but critical question: What are the most effective ways to foster responsible gambling, as well as prevent and address problem gambling?

These Effectiveness Principles are meant to spark discussion, encourage collaboration, and generate new insights into this central question. They are a starting point for industry, policymakers, regulators, academics, and practitioners—and are not intended to be a complete compilation or a statement that other methods are not relevant or appropriate. We encourage stakeholders to pursue any and all evidence-based efforts to promote responsible gambling and to address problem gambling.

Previous research findings, scientific papers, and strategic frameworks have helped guide important efforts to implement responsible gambling, prevent problem gambling, and address problem gambling behavior.¹

Our Effectiveness Principles build upon these efforts, but also represent a first-ever attempt within the United States to create a consensus statement endorsed by academics, researchers, problem gambling advocacy groups, and gambling industry organizations.

While much has been achieved in addressing problem gambling, the Responsible Gambling Collaborative aspires to make even greater strides toward smarter policies and better practices. We believe it is time for a comprehensive review of existing responsible gambling policies and

regulations, and hope these principles will assist in that assessment. Based on solid evidence and sound science, they provide a common framework for identifying the best approaches to promoting responsible gambling and preventing problem gambling.

These Principles represent the collaborative work of a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from: American Gaming Association (AGA), Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers (AGEM), Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators (APGSA), Harvard School of Public Health, National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG), National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG), National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), National Thoroughbred Racing Association, the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling, North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries (NASPL), University of Nevada, Las Vegas - International Gaming Institute, University of Memphis, and Yale School of Medicine.

We invite other organizations that share our commitment to finding the most effective ways to prevent problem gambling and help those in need to join us in this effort.

¹ See, for example, “A Science-Based Framework for Responsible Gambling: The Reno model,” Alex B Alex Blaszczynski, Robert Ladouceur, Howard Schaffer, *Journal of Gambling Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Fall 2004.

PRINCIPLE ONE

Support funding for research and evaluation.

We know research is essential to better understand and encourage responsible gambling, support prevention and treatment of problem gambling, and to advance the most effective public policies and business practices related to these issues.

Recommendations

We believe policy decisions should be informed by science and research. As one of the main beneficiaries of gaming revenue, government funding should support research into identifying behaviors that encourage responsible gambling and practices that are most effective in getting individuals having problems with gambling into treatment services. We also encourage further research into integrated care's effectiveness in addressing gambling disorder.

PRINCIPLE TWO

Support funding for problem gambling treatment.

The research is clear: treatment for gambling disorder works for many individuals. Treatment resources should be available to all, and all who seek treatment services should receive it. We believe treatment should be evidence-based, and that it may be even more effective when based on an integrated care model which takes into consideration co-morbidity issues.

Recommendations

We encourage government funding of evidence-based problem gambling treatment. We believe this is an important policy, and as such, governments should be accountable for ensuring these funds are appropriately directed to their intended purpose. We also encourage private health insurance companies (providers) to provide coverage for those seeking treatment for gambling problems.

PRINCIPLE THREE

Help patrons make informed choices about their gambling.

Gamblers who hold rational beliefs about gambling have lower risks. Making customers aware of the odds of games and potential risks of problem gambling promotes transparency and gambling literacy.

Disclosure Messaging

We believe disclosure messages regarding a player's odds of winning empower customers to make informed decisions about their gambling. We further believe brief, direct, interactive messaging may help to effectively moderate player behavior.

Recommendations

Key questions persist about which disclosure messages are most effective and for whom they are

most effective. We call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to support additional investigation into questions such as:

- What message content proves most effective in preventing problem gambling behavior?
- How does the timing and presentation of the messaging impact its effectiveness?
- Which way of delivering disclosure messaging – in person, by machine, through a digital channel – is most effective in preventing problem gambling behavior and in what form (written materials, interactive messaging, or other)?

Responsible Gambling Messaging in Advertisements

We believe advertisements that include responsible gambling messaging and information on how to access treatment are a good practice and can help connect individuals to treatment services. We also believe such messaging in advertising can improve public understanding of the gambling industry's commitment to responsible gambling, making such messaging more credible.

Recommendations

Key questions persist about the benefits of disclosures in preventing or treating problem gambling. We call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to support additional investigation into such questions.

On Property Messaging

We believe signage can help patrons make better, more informed choices about their gambling and increases patron awareness of potential problem gambling risks. We also believe signage is associated with increasing consumer outreach to treatment services.

Recommendations

We recommend signage be conspicuous and easily visible to consumers. We also encourage operators to go beyond minimum regulatory signage requirements wherever possible and ensure, for example, that messaging on signage be brief, direct, and designed to engage the consumer. Finally, we believe messaging should not be confined to brick and mortar facility signage, but rather extended to all customer contact points, including, but not restricted, to gambling websites, mobile applications, and any interactive gambling channel and environment.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Ensure every company has a responsible gambling plan and industry employees understand their role and responsibility in fostering responsible gambling and preventing problem gambling behavior.

Planning and training can help prevent problem gambling by integrating responsible gambling into wider business practices at individual and organizational levels.

Responsible Gambling Plan

We believe responsible gambling plans must be developed and implemented to promote responsible play and prevent problem gambling behavior.

Recommendations

We believe every company should develop and maintain a responsible gambling plan. Responsible gambling plans should take into account self-exclusion programs on property messaging, financial instrument restrictions, employee training, credit restrictions, and alcoholic beverage restrictions, as well as consideration of certain product offerings. To be effective, we recommend that such plans:

- Include actionable, measurable performance objectives
- Be regularly evaluated and updated
- Consider disclosure of outcomes (for example, within an annual CSR report)

Employee Training

We believe employee training can help promote responsible gambling. Therefore, all industry employees should receive responsible gambling training. That includes employees of commercial and tribal casino operators, online gambling operators, sports betting operators, lottery and retail agents, employees in the thoroughbred racing/pari-mutual racing industry, and gambling industry manufacturers and suppliers.

Responsible gambling training helps employees understand their responsibilities and role in fostering responsible gambling. Basic responsible gambling employee training should be provided to every employee; tailored training should be extended to others, depending on their role and level of direct customer engagement.

Gambling industry employees are potentially at a higher risk of developing a gambling disorder. Employers should understand this risk and ensure employees who need help can easily get it.

Recommendations

Key questions persist about which employee training practices and programs are most effective in fostering responsible gambling and preventing problem gambling behavior. We call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to investigate how employee training programs can be more effective. Further, we acknowledge that it is important for gambling operators to evaluate their own performance against internal benchmarks.

We also call for a comprehensive, industry-wide review of employee training programs and practices to determine where gaps and opportunities for shared learning may exist.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

Confirm gambling-related business practices encourage responsible gambling.

We believe more transparency for patrons around the extension of credit may advance responsible gambling.

Recommendations

To date, the issue has received very limited study. We call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to support investigation into credit extensions. Additional research could help identify practices that advance responsible gambling.

In the meantime, we believe operators can strengthen their efforts to enhance transparency in the credit extension process—including, for example, that an unpaid marker is an extraditable offense.²

To help researchers in their assessment, we encourage operators to gather data on the frequency and volume of consumer credit advances and share that data with researchers.

Finally, we suggest operators routinely review their credit extension practices with a goal of:

- Strengthening transparency of information for consumers
- Ensuring that consumers that receive a line of credit have the ability to repay the credit line
- Minimizing uncollectable credit

Policies on Alcoholic Beverage Service

Research suggests patrons tend to gamble longer and make riskier wagers when consuming alcohol in moderate-to-heavy amounts.

Recommendations

We call for operators to strictly adhere to and enforce responsible beverage service policies. All operators should train employees on effective compliance and implementation of existing required policies.

We also call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to support investigation into the effectiveness of training employees on responsible sales practices of alcoholic beverages in advancing responsible gambling.

Finally, we call for research into other intoxicants (separate from alcohol) and how they impact gambling behavior.

²“Markers” are defined as a negotiable instrument (sometimes called a “counter-check”) executed by a casino patron and made payable to the casino. A marker authorizes the casino to recover the amount of the marker from the patron’s bank account. The casino will advance funds to the patron up to the amount of the marker.

PRINCIPLE SIX

Equip consumers with the tools they need to gamble responsibly and prevent problem gambling behavior.

Consumer Tools

We believe consumers who set and adhere to spend and/or time limits more successfully moderate their gambling. We believe consumers should have access to related tools, as they can be effective in fostering responsible gambling.

Recommendations

We recommend voluntary self-limiting and self-exclusion financial tools be part of any approach to gambling management. We encourage operators to enable consumers to manage and set limits on their spending. We believe any modern payment options, including digital payments, should include tools to help consumers monitor and track their gambling and set spending limits; such tools can also provide operators greater ability to enforce the voluntary self-exclusion of problem gamblers.

Self-Exclusion

We know individuals who voluntarily self-exclude from gambling establishments and services reduce their problem gambling thoughts and behavior. We also know that self-exclusion outcomes are improved for individuals when delivered in conjunction with treatment services. We therefore believe self-exclusion is an important business practice and state policy, and we call for its adoption wherever gambling is legal.

Recommendations

Key questions persist about which practices ensure self-exclusion effectively reduces problem gambling behavior. We call upon researchers, academics, and funding institutions to support additional investigation into questions such as:

- What is the best approach to build, operate, and fund an effective self-exclusion program?
- How does a patron best initiate the self-exclusion process?
- For how long is self-exclusion most effective?
- How is self-exclusion most effectively enforced?
- What is an effective conduit from self-exclusion to treatment services?
- How broad are self-exclusion's benefits to the individual?
- What tools can be provided to individuals who self-exclude that will lead to better compliance with self-exclusion decisions?