

Tips for Having a Conversation About Problem Gambling - for Casinos

While about 2% of adult Iowans will meet criteria for a gambling disorder (gambling addiction), approximately 13% of adult Iowans experience signs or symptoms that might indicate a problem, and 25% of adult Iowans are impacted by someone else's gambling. Yet, only a fraction seek help. We believe many who suffer in silence do so because they don't know what a gambling disorder is or where to get help.

Problem Gambling is a public health issue affecting all aspects of physical, social, and mental health. It can affect families, work performance, and general well-being. It is important to know the signs and symptoms of a gambling problem. Treatment is available; treatment works; and recovery is possible. Please let this document serve as a resource when you, as a Casino Team Member, have conversations with a customer about the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program or other "problem" behavior needing to be addressed on the casino floor.

Casino team members play valued and very important roles in identifying and assisting customers who may have a problem and may need professional help.

The examples/scenarios below can be used to help you have conversations with patrons you are concerned about.

What to say when...

A customer is signing the self-exclusion only because a family member is requesting or demanding him or her to sign:

"This is something we can do. However, being able to sit down and talk to someone who can help you think through and talk about your concerns might be a better option."

A customer states, "Treatment doesn't work":

"I've heard that before, and I know sometimes talking through your experiences can help. Would you be willing to talk to someone else about this?" (Note: refer to 1-800-BETS OFF)

Overhearing a customer state "I just lost my _____ (paycheck, rent payment etc.)":

"I can imagine that has to be really tough for you (pause for a response). Sometimes being able to sit down and talk through what may be going on with you can help. I know that _____ is a place that can help. They'll listen, won't judge, and will help connect you with resources that can help, as well as talk with you about your gambling and/or financial problems."

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A customer is angry and no longer having fun:

“Hey, how are you doing? Do you want to step away for a bit? (Try to start a conversation) Have you ever thought about talking to someone about this? You don’t seem like yourself today.”

(Note: Mental health concerns like depression, grief, anxiety, etc. could be affecting a person’s gambling patterns. Sometimes if those issues are addressed, the gambling problem resolves as well).

A partner is with the customer and is pressuring them to sign self-exclusion:

“There are trained therapists who can sit down with you together to determine if this is the best thing for you to do. They will listen, won’t judge, and won’t tell you what to do; they will find the best solution for your family.”

A customer is angry about having a bad night or losing:

“It seems like you aren’t having fun. Are you having a bad night? We can’t have you yelling in here (or acting this way, etc). There is someone you can talk to about this.”

A customer states that they are friends with staff and they are having second thoughts about banning because they won’t be able to see their “friends”:

“It is a loss, and talking to professionals can help you with the loss. They can help you create avenues for new friendships and support systems.”

A customer is “just looking into” self-exclusion:

“It appears to me that there is something going on that makes you want to look into this possibility. There are some people who can talk through this decision with you.”

A customer comments “I feel different” after signing the self-exclusion:

“This does alleviate a huge part of what was going on, but if you are still experiencing depression or financial struggles there are people who can help with that. You took the first step, but for the (voluntary self-exclusion) program to work it helps to talk to someone.”

For more information please call 1-800-BETS OFF to be connected to a problem gambling treatment professional in your area. They can answer questions and get you the help you and your family may need. You can also visit www.1800BETSOFF.org to chat live with someone who understands.