

Companies Can Support Employees

As a caring, supportive organization, your company should also strive to create a healthy work environment by:

- Providing information and educating employees on how to gamble responsibly
- Instructing employees on how to recognize signs of problem gambling
- Promoting available support resources, such as a **gambler's anonymous number**. Ignoring issues of gambling in the workplace can have widespread negative consequences for employees and the company as a whole. Rather than leaving the matter unaddressed, take a proactive approach. Establish policies and make employees aware of resources available for problem gamblers.

Employees and employers can reach out to **800-426-2535** whenever they need help with a gambling problem. We also offer **gambling support for families**, and we're available 24/7. We have **speakers available** to do presentations for your organization.



Many calls to the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling's 24-Hour Helpline come from family members or friends who have discovered their loved one's gambling problem and question how they might help them.

If gambling is becoming a problem for you or someone you care about, help is available.

**We Can Help
24-hours a day**

1-800-426-2535

**Chat [wi-problemgamblers.org](https://www.wi-problemgamblers.org)
Text 850-888-4673**



The Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, Inc. provides resources, public awareness and education on gambling disorders while maintaining strict neutrality on the issue of legalized gambling.



Employers Guide to Problem Gambling



A Gambling Problem is More than Financial Hardship...

People who have a gambling problem, or have loved ones that do, bring their addiction to work with them every day. Compulsive gambling is described as a “hidden illness” since there is no breath odor, stumbling of steps or impaired speech. The negative effects are just as elusive; lost productivity, time off, even the health of employees suffer from the stress that compulsive gambling causes. When problem gamblers become desperate, they may turn to workplace crimes like embezzlement or fraud to finance their addiction. Stressed gamblers have a high risk of becoming suicidal as the only way out of their financial or legal problems.

White –collar crimes of fraud, embezzlement, forgery and tax evasion are predominate among those whose employment and economic status enable them the opportunity for such crimes. Some employees are fearful their jobs will be at stake if their supervisor knows they are a problem gambler, regardless of criminal activity. Employers may be the first to discover a gambling problem and can be the first source of information to help out the employee.

Employees who are recovering from other addictions may be more susceptible to becoming hooked on gambling.

How Gambling Affects the Workplace

Gambling in the workplace can cost companies greatly. Employees are distracted and careless at work, leading to decreased productivity and more safety issues. They are frequently absent from work and take extended lunch breaks. They may also feel a great sense of stress, which can lead to health problems, such as high blood pressure or **depression**, affecting their job performance. If they are suffering from a gambling problem, they may even be struggling with financial distress, increasing the risk of employee theft and embezzlement.

As an employer, it’s essential to recognize the effects gambling can have on a workplace — whether that gambling takes place in the office or not. To ensure problems do not arise, companies need to recognize problem gamblers and support their employees through this condition.

Have a Conversation about Problem Gambling

To reduce the risk gambling can have on a workplace, organizations need to establish policies that address gambling behavior. Unfortunately, only about **25% of companies** have procedures in place to address gambling. Your company can do better by drafting policies that explain if gambling in the workplace is acceptable and prohibiting the use of company resources to engage in gambling. If you suspect one of your employees has an issue with gambling, it is best to address your concerns with the employee. Make sure you keep these points in mind:

- Express your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs without placing blame on the employee.
- Use “I” statements rather than “you” statements, explaining how the problem affects you.
- Listen to the employee’s point of view and paraphrase what they said to show that you heard them.
- Be clear about your position.
- Plan ahead for possible reactions, especially hostile ones.

Warning Signs of Problem Gambling at Work:

Work Performance:

- Chronically late for work.
- Reads gambling related materials openly.
- Unexplained absences or disappearances from work.
- Leaves work early to gamble or meet bookie.
- Excessive use of sick days.
- Vacation time centered around gambling activity.
- Vacation not taken in a large block.
- Long lunches or breaks for gambling activity.
- Excessive use of telephone.

Financial Signs:

- Borrows money from co-workers or advances from employer.
- Personal bills mailed to work instead of home.
- Numerous loans at credit union.
- Requests pay instead of vacation time off.
- Family asks about salary.
- Theft of company merchandise or property.
- Altered expense account.

What can you do?

The next time some of the “facts” just don’t add up, take a closer look at the patterns of employee’s life.

- Have patience.
- Listen.
- Be positive.
- Do not criticize.
- Understand that relapse can be part of the recovery process.
- Make the referral to the Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling’s 24-hour Helpline.
- Encourage gamblers and their family/friends to attend a GA or Gam-Anon meeting.
- Make referral to EAP and or HR while maintaining the confidentiality of the employee.