

knowledge snapshot

The Reno Model as a framework for responsible gambling



What this article is about

Gambling has become more widely available in the past few decades. Concerns have been raised that excessive gambling can lead to harms to the individual, their family, and the community. Thus, there is a need to consider and address gambling-related harms as a public health issue.

In this article, the authors proposed a framework, the Reno Model, to advance and coordinate efforts to prevent and reduce gambling-related harms. The framework emerged from a meeting that was held in Reno. According to the authors, the Reno Model is intended to guide the development of responsible gambling policies that are based on sound evidence. In the article, the authors outlined the key principles and assumptions of the model.

What was done?

The authors argued for the need of a common framework to guide responsible gambling policies and practices. They proposed the Reno Model and outlined its key principles and assumptions. The authors also urged for strong collaboration between key stakeholders, including the gambling industry, governments, researchers, health and welfare services, and community and consumer groups.

What you need to know

According to the authors, two barriers have hindered the efforts to prevent gambling-related harms and promote responsible gambling. First, there is a lack of clarity in defining gambling-related harms. Various definitions and criteria have been used, which adds to the confusion and uncertainty on how to assess gambling-related harms. Secondly, there is a lack of

Why is this article important?

This article outlines the Reno Model as a framework to guide responsible gambling policies and practices. The model is based on two fundamental principles: 1) the decision to gamble is a person's individual choice; and 2) to make this decision, people must be informed. The Reno Model has had great influence over research and regulation with regard to gambling harm minimization.

The model has stimulated rich debate over what "responsible gambling" means because of perceived conflicts with more recent public health models of addressing gambling harm that emphasize gambling operator duty of care and consumer protection.

consensus regarding what responsible gambling practices are. Most of the efforts to date have been based on anecdotes, common sense, and personal beliefs rather than on sound data and evidence.

The authors proposed the Reno Model as a common framework to guide the development of policies and practices to address gambling-related harms and promote responsible gambling. In the Reno Model, "responsible gambling" refers to programs created by governments, gambling industry, and other stakeholders to fulfill their obligation to reduce gambling-related harms.

The Reno Model rests on two fundamental principles:

- 1) the decision to gamble resides within the individual and represents a choice;

- 2) to properly make this decision, the individual must have the opportunity to be informed.

In other words, people have the freedom of choice regarding their decision to gamble or not. To guarantee that people can make an informed choice, the gambling industry needs to provide accurate and relevant information. Information should include the chance of winning and payout schedules, and gambling advertisements should not be misleading.

The Reno Model is also based on a few assumptions. Importantly, it assumes that safe levels of gambling are possible, and gambling provides recreational, social and economic benefits. The model acknowledges that gamblers, family members, and others can suffer significant harm from excessive gambling. Responsible gambling strategies need to determine that the social benefits from gambling exceed the social costs. Finally, the model assumes that abstinence is a viable and important, but not necessarily essential, goal for individuals who have developed gambling-related harms. A return to safe levels of gambling can be an achievable goal for some gamblers.

The authors argue that governments, industry, and other key stakeholders are obliged to reduce the incidence and prevalence of gambling-related harms. Thus, they urge these stakeholders to collaborate and commit to reducing gambling-related harms, and to clarify their respective roles in a coordinated responsible gambling program. In this program, key stakeholders will work together to inform and evaluate public policies and to establish an action plan with short- and long-term priorities. Furthermore, they will use scientific research to guide the development of public policies and to monitor the action plan.

Who is it intended for?

This article is intended for gambling operators, policy makers, researchers, health and welfare service providers, and community groups. It outlines a framework that could be used to guide responsible gambling strategies. The framework has stimulated a

rich debate on what “responsible gambling” means and how best to define the term.

About the researchers

Alex Blaszczynski is a Professor and the Director of the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic at the University of Sydney in Sydney, Australia. **Robert Ladouceur** is a Professor Emeritus at the School of Psychology at the Université Laval in Québec, Canada. **Howard J. Shaffer** is the Morris E. Chafetz Associate Professor of Psychiatry in the Field of Behavioral Sciences at Harvard Medical School in Boston, USA. For more information about this article, please contact Alex Blaszczynski at alex.blaszczynski@sydney.edu.au.

Citation

Blaszczynski, A., Ladouceur, R., & Shaffer, H. J. (2004). A science-based framework for responsible gambling: The Reno Model. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 20(3), 301-317. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOGS.0000040281.49444.e2>

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in responsible gambling policies, standards and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

