

# research snapshot

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## Casino employees' attitudes on and experiences with responsible gambling training

### What this research is about

Casino employees receive responsible gambling training, which teaches them how to recognize and respond to at-risk or distressed players. This training is an initiative that aims to reduce problematic gambling through early intervention by front line employees. However, research that evaluates the impact of such training programs has been limited in Canada. This study aimed to evaluate employees' attitudes about and experiences with the responsible gambling training that they had taken in the past. Specifically, this study examined what employees thought about responsible gambling training, and their experiences with recognizing and responding to signs of problem gambling in players. Managers usually undergo more training than other employees. Thus, this study examined any differences in attitudes and experiences between managers and other employees.

### What the researchers did

A total of 130 participants were recruited from ten casinos in Ontario, Canada. Participants were asked to fill out an online questionnaire that examined their attitudes and experiences with recognizing and responding to players showing signs of problem gambling. Participants were asked about their job, how satisfied they were with it, their managers' attitudes and their attitudes about the training that they had received. They also provided opinions about any barriers to identifying signs of problem gambling, and their experiences with responding to players who might be at risk. The researchers examined differences in attitudes and experiences between managers/supervisors and other employees, as well as between men and women.

### What you need to know

Since casino employees receive responsible gambling training, it is expected that they are able to identify and assist players who may be displaying signs of problem gambling. However, there are limited studies that examine the impact of such training and if employees feel comfortable to intervene when needed. This study evaluated employees' attitudes about responsible gambling training and experiences with identifying and aiding distressed players. This study found that almost all employees agreed that training had improved their ability to recognize and respond to at-risk or distressed players. Employees also reported what they perceive as barriers to successful identifications. Moreover, employees who found it challenging to respond to signs of problem gambling in players were less satisfied with their job. There were few differences between managers and other employees, as well as between men and women. Most employees reported that they were encouraged to identify and provide support to players who might be at risk. However, the majority indicated that more training was needed.

### What the researchers found

More than 80% of employees reported that responsible gambling training helped them to become better at identifying and responding to distressed or at-risk players. The majority of employees had positive attitudes towards the training and wanted additional training in the future. More than half of employees reported that it was not difficult to identify signs of problem gambling. But more than half also indicated it was difficult to respond to such signs.

Employees stated that managers often encouraged them to intervene when needed. They specified that the indicators they most often looked for in players who might be at-risk included anger, high gambling frequency, and long gambling duration. The manager/supervisors were able to observe more 'red flags' for problem gambling. Their responses involved additional signs including players who begin to gamble when the casino opens, who disclose their problems, who borrow money, who become visibly upset, or when others show up to ask about someone's whereabouts.

With respect to appropriate ways to assist players, the employees stated that it was important to report such signs to managers, to start conversations with the players, and to refer them to helpful resources. They also listed that the most common barriers to identifying someone at risk of problem gambling included a lack of communication between employees who start or finish their shifts, a lack of time, and inadequate employee training.

It was found that employees generally had moderate job satisfaction. Managers/supervisors had higher job satisfaction and had worked longer at the casinos. Those with lower job satisfaction had met more players with gambling problems and found it more challenging to respond to those players. Overall, there were few differences between managers and other employees in terms of attitudes toward responsible gambling and experiences with problem gambling. There were also few differences between men and women.

#### How you can use this research

The importance of responsible gambling training should be emphasized across all casinos and to all employees. Casino employees represent front line helpers who can be trained to reduce the risk of problem gambling. The results indicated that many casino employees still found it a challenge to respond to players who might be at risk of problem gambling. Policy makers should advocate for more extensive responsible gambling training programs to be offered to casino employees. Researchers should continue to evaluate previous programs to build a manual for a training format and content that works best for casino employees.

#### About the researchers

**Lena C. Quilty** is an independent scientist at the Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. She is also an assistant professor at the Department of Psychiatry and an associate member in the Graduate Department of Clinical Psychological Science at the University of Toronto. Questions about this research can be directed to [lena.quilty@camh.ca](mailto:lena.quilty@camh.ca). **Janine Robinson** is an advanced practice clinician and educator at the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. **Alex Blaszczynski** is a professor of clinical psychology; he is also the head of the School of Psychology at the University of Sydney, and the director of the Gambling Research Unit and Treatment Clinic.

#### Citation

Quilty, L. C., Robinson, J., & Blaszczynski, A. (2015). Responsible gambling training in Ontario casinos: Employee attitudes and experience. *International Gambling Studies*, 15(3), 361-376.  
doi: [10.1080/14459795.2015.1056206](https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2015.1056206)

#### Keywords

Gambling, primary prevention, training, staff training, problem gambling

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