

# research snapshot

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## Managers and HR officers' experiences in a workplace-oriented problem gambling prevention program

### What this research is about

It is important to promote health in the workplace. Managers and HR officers can use workplace health promotion programs (WHPPs) to ensure that they meet their employees' needs for a variety of issues, including alcohol and drug use. Previous research has explored the effectiveness of these programs. Unfortunately, few WHPPs target gambling. This is surprising, given that past studies found that many employees reported using the computers in their workplace to gamble. Gambling in the workplace is quite widespread, so it would be important to prevent problem gambling. Problem gambling can lead to workplace-related harms, such as poor performance, absence from work, and job loss. This research aims to explore what managers and HR officers have to say about a WHPP for problem gambling.

### What the researchers did

This study was part of a larger study that implemented a workplace PG prevention program at ten organizations. Five organizations received the intervention and the other five were on the waitlist. The intervention included two main components: (1) policy development and implementation, and (2) skills-development training. The policy component aimed to help the organizations implement or update policies for problem gambling. The skills-development training aimed to improve knowledge among managers and HR officers, and their ability to talk to employees who show signs of problem gambling.

The researchers did the interviews between two to four months after the skill development training sessions. The leaders of the training sessions informed participants about the interviews. Each interview took

### What you need to know

This study explored the experiences of HR officers and managers in an intervention targeted to address problem gambling in the workplace. This intervention was a part of a workplace health promotion program (WHPP). Ten HR officers and 13 managers were interviewed about their experiences. Results revealed that participants were satisfied with the intervention. It made them more aware of gambling problems in the workplace and more equipped to deal with the problems, if they had to. However, participants would like the intervention to be tailored to each organization. They also wanted to have more support on how to implement policy changes in ways that could reach the employees.

place at the participants' workplace in a neutral location. The final sample included 23 participants (10 HR officers and 13 managers).

### What the researchers found

Results revealed six major themes.

- The first theme involved expectations of the skills-development training. Most HR officers had positive expectations, while most managers had no expectations. The most common expectation was to obtain practical skills or gain a tool.
- The second theme regarded participants' experiences and beliefs about problem gambling. Participants had no prior experience dealing with problem gambling but noted that gambling was becoming more common. There were differences in what they believed 'gambling' was. Some

mentioned online casino gambling at work, while others mentioned sports betting with colleagues. Some participants talked about gambling advertising in the media, which they generally perceived negatively.

- The third theme, ‘a good basis’, included what participants thought the program gave them. Participants found it useful to learn about problem gambling, including early signs and potential risk factors in the workplace. Some found it useful to know that managers have a mandate to act if they are concerned about gambling problems in the workplace. Some appreciated that they were equipped with knowing how to handle certain situations.
- The fourth theme, ‘the difficult conversation’, included how to approach an employee who gamble in the workplace. They noted that they felt more confident after the intervention. Some participants found it useful to frame the conversation as ‘unfamiliar’, rather than ‘difficult.’
- The fifth theme was about what participants appreciated most about the training. Most participants recalled the cases describing people with problem gambling and the consequences. Participants also liked learning about the facts and statistics for problem gambling. They found it useful to have the exercises and opportunities for practice during the sessions.
- The final theme related to remaining obstacles. The participants reported that the program should have been tailored to each organization. Lastly, they were not clear about how the new policies would reach their employees.

### How you can use this research

This research could be used by organizations and prevention service providers. Organizations could adopt the interventions and bring awareness to gambling problems in the workplace. Policy makers could make changes to workplace mandates and include this training in organizations. Future research

could examine the factors that make this intervention successful, and limitations that need to be overcome.

### About the researchers

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### Citation

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### 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.

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