



PROBLEM GAMBLING & THE FAMILY

gAp

Gambling
Awareness
Program



When someone has a gambling problem, it affects the entire family. This can include parents, young children, adult children no longer living in the same home, grandparents, and siblings. The person with a gambling problem is struggling with an addiction. They may be secretive in an attempt to hide the gambling and it may take some time before family or friends learn the severity of the problem.

This pamphlet will offer some insights into how families are affected by gambling, the rules and roles of family members, and how to reach out for help.

For every 1 Problem Gambler
6 others
are affected through
third-party harms

FAMILY RULES

Often there are unspoken rules within a problem gambling family, which are also present in families with alcohol, drug, mental health and other problems. These are rules of survival, which assist families to live and function as best they can in their situation. They are as follows:

- **Don't Talk** - There is often no discussion about gambling issues that can escalate into not talking about other problems. This can trickle into school, the workplace, friendships and other relationships.
- **Don't Trust** - When there is a lack of communication and problems are not being discussed openly, trust erodes among family members. Children may find it difficult to trust others, such as teachers or friends, affecting the ability to maintain healthy relationships.
- **Don't Feel** - When kids aren't allowed to express their feelings through communication and lose trust they become tired of feeling disappointed and hurt, so it becomes easier to block out feelings. When feelings are numbed and emotions are stuffed down it is difficult to have healthy relationships.

FAMILY ROLES

Like Family Rules, the roles of the family are unknown, unspoken, and are used to survive within the family. The roles may change as the family ages and are not carved in stone. They are as follows:



Enabler - The person who ends up covering for the gambler. They may do extra chores, try to keep the household organized, and work to keep the children on track with school, sports, etc. The enabler can be the spouse or an older child.



Hero - The hero could be a child that is an over-achiever in things such as academics, sports, or the arts. They may take on a parental role and watch over the other children. They work diligently to bring something positive to the family and put considerable pressure on themselves to be the best. They may be at higher risk of an addiction themselves, such as alcohol or drugs.



The Clown - Uses humor and jokes as a coping mechanism.



The Lost Child - Usually quiet and tries to avoid family drama. Might live in a fantasy world to escape problems and may be a target for online predators.



The Scapegoat - Often gets into trouble attempting to take the target off of the gambler and may be a rule breaker. This person usually struggles academically or professionally and gets attention through negative feedback.

HOW ARE FAMILIES AFFECTED?

MONEY PROBLEMS

Bank accounts, credit cards, and savings will often be accessed to gamble with and this debt can accumulate. Money problems may make the family feel scared, angry, and betrayed.

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

The stress of gambling problems sometimes causes health problems, for both the person who gambles and the family. This can include memory and concentration problems, anxiety, depression, and stress-related problems such as poor sleep, ulcers, stomach issues, headaches, and muscle pains.

GUILT & SHAME

Many spouses feel a lot of guilt and shame over their partners gambling problem, especially when a substantial amount of money has been lost. Remember that people with gambling problems are very good at lying, hiding, and being very secretive about covering up the problem. They may resort to anger and arguments to intimidate their spouse that can escalate into physical and emotional abuse.

ABUSE

Family violence is more common when families are in crisis. Gambling problems can lead to physical and/or emotional abuse of a partner, elder parent, or child.

If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

Getting help can be hard to do, but it's an important first step for families. Refer to one of the helping resources on the back of this pamphlet.



RESOURCES

Problem Gambling Helpline	1.800.306.6789 spgh.ca
Gambler's Anonymous	1.855.781.9522 gamblersanonymous saskatchewan.ca
Credit Counselling Society	1.888.527.8999 nomoredebts.org
Gambling Awareness Program	SaskGAP.ca
Kids Help Phone	1.800.688.6868 Text 686868
Saskatchewan Health Line	Call 811



Community
Initiatives
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Connect • Engage • Thrive



Canadian Mental
Health Association
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Mental health for all