

WEB LETTER

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Problem Gambling in the Workplace? This September is a Good Time to Look at Your Policies.

Every September is Responsible Gaming Education Month (RGEM). This year, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) is joining with the American Gaming Association (AGA) in celebrating the industry's 25 years of efforts to promote gambling literacy, consumer education, and associated employee training aimed at the prevention of problem gambling. If you find yourself or a loved one struggling with an addiction to gambling, there is help and hope available in Florida through the **24/7, Confidential, and Multilingual 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine.** Human Resource (HR) Professional Day is also recognized in September, on the 26th. These two events have more in common than you might think.

Helping employees with addiction is an important part of health promotion in the workplace. It's not surprising that many health care providers, Employee Assistance (EA) professionals, and HR managers are not as familiar with gambling disorder as they are with alcohol and drug problems, but make no mistake: the life impacts can be just as tragic and even more pervasive, with the average problem gambler affecting 8-10 additional people. If left unnoticed, unchecked, or untreated, individuals suffering from compulsive gambling can face financial devastation including debt, eviction or foreclosure, and homelessness; relationship problems up to and including divorce; mental and physical health complications including anxiety, depression, heart conditions, and even suicidal ideation and attempts; and so much more – not to mention problems at work. For the gambler and even an impacted loved one, problem gambling can lead to performance and productivity problems, disciplinary action, and termination. **For the employer, gambling addiction in the workplace can mean substantial economic loss, increased liability, and when the gambler becomes desperate, risk of resulting criminal activity, such as embezzlement.**

For HR professionals, it is important to have a solid knowledge and awareness of how the issue can impact individuals in their workplace, and they should be equipped with resources to provide concerned employees, **starting with information about the 888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine.** Because EA professionals are often counseling and referring employees to seek additional treatment for their mental health, it is vital for them to understand the screening instruments, assessments, and resources specific to compulsive gambling.

Did you know that the FCCG has developed a problem gambling awareness toolkit designed for the workplace called *Managing the Odds*? This program arms employers with the tools necessary to address and provide resources for individuals in the workplace

with gambling problems. Included materials provide specific information pertaining to workplace impacts, strategies for addressing, and policy development to establish protocols and services for employees (or employers) who may fall prey to the negative effects of gambling. *Managing the Odds* also bridges the gap between workplace programs which address employee alcohol, drugs, and tobacco use to include awareness and resources for help with a gambling addiction.

With football season upon us, it's also a good time to shine the light on a popular gambling activity in the workplace: office sports betting pools. While such pools are often casually viewed as a way to increase camaraderie and team spirit in the workplace, they can significantly decrease productivity among the workforce, lead to liability for an employer, and present the risk of relapse for employees in recovery for gambling addiction. **Employers and employees alike should be aware that one or more of their colleagues may be suffering from or in recovery for gambling addiction, even if it isn't apparent.**

To find help for yourself or a loved one, or information and programs for your place of business, don't hesitate to call or text the **888-ADMIT-IT** HelpLine. FCCG's highly trained HelpLine Specialists can connect you to proven resources for problem gambling help, along with programs and research for professionals.

Do You Know the Signs of Problem Gambling in the Workplace?

- Lower quality of work
- Repeated absences and/or taking longer lunch breaks
- Asking colleagues to cover for them
- Being secretive
- Shutting down computers and phones quickly when someone comes in the room
- Asking coworkers to borrow money
- Asking employers for additional shifts or pay advances
- Irritability and poor concentration

Contact FCCG's 24/7, Confidential, and Multilingual Problem Gambling HelpLine:

888-ADMIT-IT