



# **Gambling Host Responsibility**

Guide for Venue Staff





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# Introduction

If the venue you work in has gaming machines, it has a legal duty to minimise gambling harm. All members of staff also have certain responsibilities to keep gamblers safe.

We know that gambling host responsibility has some challenges. We've developed this guide with the help of venue managers and staff across the country to help you overcome those challenges – so that you can more easily do your job and stay within the law.

## Why should I care?

### Gambling can be harmful

Being a responsible host means taking care of your customers. While many gamblers will be gambling at levels they can afford, approximately one in every three regular pokie players is experiencing harm as a result of their gambling (2014 Health & Lifestyle Survey, Health Promotion Agency). The financial and emotional stress from this is likely to be affecting their household, their wider family and friend network and their workplace.

While one person may be able to afford to spend \$20 on gambling, for another it may mean going without basic grocery items that week. And while someone may be happy and safe spending two hours in front of a machine, for another that might take them away from caring for their children or other important responsibilities.

### It's the Law

➤ *The law says that any venue with pokies must minimise the risk of problem gambling. This is the responsibility of every staff member who deals with gamblers. This guide provides practical information to help you meet these responsibilities.*



## How should I use this guide?

› *The good news is that it's not your job to know anything about a person's financial situation or other information about their life to be a responsible gambling host.*

This guide provides some simple steps that you as a staff member can take every day to keep your customers safe. It also includes the signs of harmful gambling to look for and information on how to respond.

You don't need to memorise every word in this document. You should just be familiar enough with this guide that you can refer to relevant parts as and when needed.

## What if I'm a venue manager or operator?

As a venue operator or manager, you have additional responsibilities. These include the following:

### Policy

Your venue must have a harm prevention and minimisation policy (or policy for identifying problem gamblers). Your corporate society or trust will provide the policy.

› *Make sure that you are familiar with your venue's policy as you are legally required to meet that. Use this guide to help put that policy into practice.*

### Training

The Gambling (Harm Prevention and Minimisation) Regulations 2004 require that class 4 Licence Holders must provide problem gambling awareness training to venue staff. Training must be provided to all managers and venue personnel, to ensure that there is always a trained person at the venue whenever the pokies are available.

› *It's good practice to make training available to any staff member that has regular contact with gamblers (eg, staff that undertake the gambling area sweep).*

The minimum training requirements are in your venue's harm prevention and minimisation policy. A person who is trained should be able to identify signs of problem gambling, and know how to approach a gambler who is experiencing harm. They should be able to provide that gambler with information about gambling harm and gambling support services, and offer the exclusion process.

› *Use this guide to support training. It has practical things that staff can do to help stay within the law.*

# What to do Everyday

## The basics

- *Take every opportunity to get to know gamblers*
- *Learn the General and Strong Signs*
- *Be observant during sweeps of the gambling area*
- *Write down signs in your log book/incident register*
- *Share concerns with other staff*
- *Consider your cash and alcohol service*



## Take every opportunity to get to know gamblers

### Greet each player

It's standard practice and good customer care to greet each player as they enter the room. You don't need to have a long conversation, you could simply say "Hello", ask them "How are you?" or "What are you up to today?" This will remind gamblers that you are taking an interest in them and will be keeping an eye out for them.

### Cash Withdrawals

Any EFTPOS cash withdrawal provides a great opportunity to chat with gamblers. If possible, it's a good idea to slow down the process so you can talk. You may like to ask "How are you going?" or "What are you up to for the rest of day?" This can help lift them out of the gambling zone and remind them of their responsibilities outside of the venue.

### Chat regularly

One of the most important things you can do is to get to know your gamblers by having some regular communication with them.

*Chat to them whenever you can – as they come in, as you do a sweep of the gambling area and as you are serving them at the bar. If you do this, it will be easier to develop a good rapport with each gambler, and you'll start to build up a picture of how they usually gamble and behave.*

### Look out for changes in gambling behaviour

If you get to know more regular gamblers you will start to notice their usual gambling habits. It is particularly important to take note if their gambling changes at all (e.g. an increase in time or money). You should remember to note these changes in behaviours in your logbook/incident register.

## Learn the General and Strong Signs of harmful gambling

*There are a number of behaviours that are most frequently seen in gamblers that are experiencing some harm from their gambling. It is vital that you get to know these signs so that you know what to look for during sweeps of the gambling area and how to respond appropriately. Refer to pages 10 and 13 for the General and Strong Signs of harmful gambling.*

## Be observant during sweeps of the gambling area

### What to look for in the gambling area

*It's good practice to undertake a sweep of the gambling area every 15 minutes. This allows staff the opportunity to clear glasses and check machines. This regular sweep should most importantly be used to observe gamblers. In particular, you should keep a look out for:*

- **Minors**
- **Excluded Gamblers** (see page 16)
- **General or Strong Signs of harmful gambling** (see pages 10 and 13).

### Minors

A minor is anyone who is under the age of 18 years. It's against the law for anyone under 18 to play gaming machines. No exceptions.

If you think someone is under 18, ask them for photo ID. If they don't have any, you must make sure that they stay out of the gambling area otherwise you risk being prosecuted.

### Prizes and minors

A prize must not be paid out to a person who is under 18.

If you think a prize winner may be under 18, you must keep the winnings for up to seven days to allow them the opportunity to prove they are 18 or older. You must tell them you are doing this. You must also keep a record of their name, address, the date and details of the prize. If they can't verify their age within seven days, the money is to be treated as net proceeds of class 4 gambling.

### Adult supervision of minors

Minors are exposed to harm if the supervising adult has either taken them into the gambling area or has left them unsupervised in other parts of the venue while they are gambling.

There are some things that you can do to keep minors safe from gambling harm. You should make sure that:

- Minors are not allowed in the gambling area at all
- Minors are not left unsupervised in other parts of the venue or car park if the supervising adult is in the gambling area, and
- The car park is checked regularly to make sure that minors haven't been left unsupervised in cars.

### Fines and minors

*It is against the law to allow someone under the age of 18 to play the pokies at your venue. Venue management may be fined up to \$1,000 and the corporate society or trust that operates the pokies in your venue may be fined up to \$5,000. The underage gambler may be fined up to \$500.*





## Write down signs in your log book/incident register

All venues should keep up-to-date written records of any concerns about gamblers in their venue. Many gaming societies provide incident registers to their venues for this purpose. Some venues have their own diary or logbook that they use. If you do not have somewhere to log your concerns, a template is available to download at [choicenotchance.org.nz/gamblehostpack](http://choicenotchance.org.nz/gamblehostpack). Simply print it out and keep it in a place that is easy for staff to refer to.

***If you have noticed any General or Strong Signs of harmful gambling in your patrons or have any concerns, then you should note those down in your venue's gambling log book/incident register. If in doubt, write it down.***

Remember to look through the gambling log book/incident register each time you come in for a shift. This will bring you up to speed with what's been happening. Log books are important for piecing together a series of unrelated incidents and showing a pattern in a player's behaviour over time.

## Share concerns with other staff

***Share any concerns you have about gamblers with the manager and other colleagues. Your venue may have a regular staff meeting where you can share this information or you might simply choose a quiet moment before, during or after your shift to chat with other staff.***

It's good practice to talk about certain behaviours that are causing you concern and hear from others about things that they have also noticed. Together you should discuss what the best way is to respond to someone who you are concerned about and even role play scenarios. Some suggestions on making an approach are outlined in the following sections.

If the log book has noted three or more General Signs in one person in close succession, that person is very likely to be experiencing harm and a Strong Signs approach should be made (see pages 14–17).

When filling in the gambling log book/incident register, you should note:

- The date and time
- The name of the gambler involved (if you know it) or a nickname/description so other staff may know who you are talking about, and any contact details you know
- A description of the sign/s that you observed
- What action you took (if any)
- Your name and the name/s of any other staff who noticed the sign.



## Consider your cash and alcohol service

### Cash Withdrawal Limits

Most gamblers have a limit in mind before they start gambling, and they will usually take that amount out on their first withdrawal. If they make repeated EFTPOS withdrawals, they are likely to be spending more than they wanted to.

*Your venue may decide to limit EFTPOS withdrawals to one per customer per day and/or a maximum cash limit. Alternatively, your venue may decide to use the second withdrawal as an opportunity to discreetly hand over a harm minimisation wallet leaflet with their cash.*

This will demonstrate that your venue is committed to reducing gambling harm and make it easier for staff to keep customers safe. Decide what your venue's withdrawal limits are, and let players know these limits.

### Be considerate when paying out winnings

*Keep an eye out for gamblers who win a jackpot or hit cancel credit. It's good practice to pay them out in \$50 and \$100 notes so that they can't put the cash straight back into the machine. Alternatively, you could offer to hold the cash in the safe until they go home.*

### Alcohol service

Alcohol can cloud judgement and may encourage someone to play for longer or with more money than they would have otherwise.

### EFTPOS repeatedly declined

A customer may attempt to withdraw cash, but have their EFTPOS card declined. Repeated attempts like this are a General Sign of harmful gambling and you should note it in your venue's gambling log book/incident register. If this occurs, it's good practice to say "Sorry you have reached your limit for today" and discreetly hand them a harm minimisation wallet leaflet when returning their card.



Avoid offering alcohol to gamblers while they are playing. Only serving alcohol away from the gambling area will encourage gamblers to take breaks and provides an opportunity for you to chat with them out of the gambling area.

# What to do if you see **General Signs of harmful gambling**

## **The Basics**

- *What are the General Signs?*
- *1 Sign - gently check-in with the gambler*
- *3+ Signs - escalate to the Strong Signs approach*

## What are the General Signs?

The behaviours listed here are more likely to be seen in gamblers experiencing problems and are good predictors of problem gambling. It is important that you are familiar with these signs so you know what to look for and how to respond.

<b>General Signs</b>	<b>What to do</b>
<p><b>Length of play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambles for long periods (three or more hours) without taking a break</li> <li>• Gambles most days</li> <li>• Finds it difficult to stop at closing time</li> </ul>	<p><b>If you see any of these General Signs in a gambler, you should gently check-in on that person.</b></p> <p>If you have noticed three or more General Signs in a gambler, then it should be escalated to the Strong Signs approach.</p>
<p><b>Social behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becomes angry at or stands over other players</li> <li>• Rude to other gamblers or staff</li> <li>• Complains to staff about losing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Money</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts large wins straight back into the machine</li> <li>• Tries to withdraw money two or more times</li> <li>• EFTPOS repeatedly declined</li> <li>• Leaves venue to find more money to gamble</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Behaviour during play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tries to play two or more machines</li> <li>• Plays intensely without reacting to what's going on around them</li> <li>• Plays very fast (high spend per line)</li> <li>• Shows frustration (grunting/groaning, playing roughly)</li> <li>• Shows some signs of distress (looks depressed, sweating, nervous/edgy)</li> <li>• Has gambling rituals or superstitions (rubbing, talking to machine)</li> </ul>	

## 1 Sign - gently check-in with the gambler

*If you see any General Signs in a gambler, then you should gently check-in on that person. Here are some suggestions:*

- Remember that any approach should be gentle and discreet.
- You may choose to simply ask "How are you doing?" or "How are the machines treating you today?" or "Let me know if there's anything I can help with" or "What are you up to for the rest of the day?".
- You could offer them a free tea/coffee to encourage them to take a break.
- You may like to discreetly provide them a harm minimisation wallet leaflet.

Remember that even if the gambler does not appear to respond particularly positively to this gentle approach, it's likely to make them reflect on their gambling and help them to gamble within their limits.



## 3+ Signs – escalate to the Strong Signs approach

It is important that you note any General Signs you see down in your logbook/incident register. This helps to ensure that all staff are aware of concerns and helps to build a picture in a player's behaviour over time.

*If you have seen or noted three or more General Signs in one person in close succession, that person is very likely to be experiencing harm. A Strong Signs approach should be made (see pages 14–17).*



# What to do if you see **Strong Signs of harmful gambling**

## **The Basics**

- *What are the Strong Signs?*
- *Consider which staff member is best to approach the gambler*
- *Approach the gambler sensitively and discreetly*
- *Provide a harm minimisation wallet leaflet*
- *Offer support services*
- *Support the exclusion process*
- *Respond to concerns from a third party*

## What are the Strong Signs?

The behaviours listed here are very likely to be shown by a problem gambler. Keep an eye out for any of these signs in any of your gamblers. If you see any of these signs in your gamblers than you should immediately take the actions specified below.

<b>Strong Signs</b>	<b>What to do</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gambler tells staff that gambling is causing them problems</li> <li>• Shows obvious signs of distress (crying, holding head in hands, shaking)</li> <li>• Has an angry outburst towards staff, customer or machine (shouting/swearing, kicking/hitting machine)</li> <li>• Appearance or hygiene deteriorates significantly</li> <li>• Tries to borrow money from customers or staff</li> <li>• Gambles from opening to closing</li> <li>• Leaves children in car while gambling</li> <li>• Friends or family raise concerns about the gambler</li> <li>• Goes out of their way to avoid being seen at the venue (including asking staff to not let others know they are there)</li> </ul>	<p><b>If you see any of these Strong Signs in a gambler, decide which staff member is best to approach them. That staff member should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach the gambler sensitively and discreetly</li> <li>• Provide them with a harm minimisation wallet leaflet</li> <li>• Offer them support to contact a gambling support service, and</li> <li>• Offer to help them self exclude or consider issuing a venue exclusion order.</li> </ul>



## Consider which staff member is best to approach the gambler

*It's good to initially think through which staff member would be best to approach someone you are concerned about and how that might be done. This may be the manager or the staff member (acting on behalf of the manager) who has the best rapport with that gambler. Ensure that staff member has a good understanding of the specific General/Strong Signs that have been seen and any other relevant information about the gambler before they follow the approach from pages 14–17.*

## Approach the gambler sensitively and discreetly

### Be as discreet as possible

Pick a moment when they are away from the machines or have finished a session. It's good to think in advance of a quiet spot in the venue that you could have a chat. You may offer them a complimentary tea or coffee away from the machines.

### Be kind

Any approach should be made in a helpful and respectful way to avoid embarrassment for the person concerned. This probably won't be easy for either of you. It's useful to prepare for these situations by thinking through in advance what you will say and possibly role-playing it with a colleague.

You could start by asking customers an open ended question – like “Are you okay?” or “How are the pokies treating you?” It's important to talk through what you've seen or heard and let them know that it's your responsibility as a host to check on them.

*The gambler is likely to feel ashamed of their gambling and may not be particularly receptive to your approach. It's always good to remember that despite their initial response, the approach you make is still likely to have a positive impact on their lives and those around them.*

## Provide a harm minimisation wallet leaflet



Your venue is legally required to stock leaflets for gamblers. You should provide them a harm minimisation wallet leaflet to take away with them. The leaflet is discreet to hand over, small enough to fit in their pocket and includes information about characteristics and consequences of problem gambling, and how to get help.



## Offer support services

*Let the gambler know that there is free and confidential support and advice available. It's good practice to offer to help them make contact with a gambling support service. You're not expected to provide the individual support that a trained counsellor can offer, but you can help the gambler by putting them in contact with a service. It's often this step that will put them on the right path to controlling their gambling.*

There are two gambling support service options. Both are free and confidential and happy to provide support and advice to gamblers or anyone at all that is affected or concerned about a gambler.

### Gambling helpline

*In New Zealand there is a free 24-hour Gambling Helpline – 0800 654 655 – that offers professional telephone support to gamblers.*

Helpline staff can talk through any issues over the phone or refer gamblers to free face-to-face counselling in their local area. They are also happy to talk to others who have particular concerns about gamblers, including venue staff.



### Face-to-face gambling support services

There are also a number of free gambling support services throughout New Zealand that gamblers or concerned others can meet with. There is a wide range of services, including culturally specific services, for those individuals that might prefer to go to a Māori, Pacific or Asian service.

You can find out what support services there are and how to contact them by phoning the Gambling Helpline – 0800 654 655 – or by looking them up at [choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support](https://choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support).

It can be worthwhile getting to know the support services operating in your local area. You may like to invite them to a staff meeting so they can explain more about what they offer and how they can support you in your interactions with gamblers. It's useful to get to know the support service in advance, so you can easily make contact if you do ever need some support for your patrons.

➤ [choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support](https://choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support)

## Support the exclusion process

*Exclusion orders are a legal protection for problem gamblers. The exclusion order is not a disciplinary tool and should not be used in that way. An exclusion order is often a very useful way to help a gambler to get their gambling issues under control.*

### Self exclusion

Self-exclusion is when a gambler chooses to be excluded from one or more venues – meaning they can't gamble there for a period of time. If asked, a staff member must issue an exclusion order to anyone that seeks it. Alternatively, if you have real concerns about a person's gambling you should offer to help them with the self-exclusion process.

In most areas of the country a Multi-Venue Exclusion (MVE) system is available that allows gamblers to exclude themselves from a number of venues in a defined area at one time without having to be there in person. Your local gambling support service will be able to tell you if there is a MVE programme operating in your area and who your coordinator is (see [choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support](http://choicenotchance.org.nz/help-support)).

### Venue-initiated exclusion

*If a person is showing any of the Strong Signs of harmful gambling, it's recommended that you firstly offer to support them with the self-exclusion process. However, if they refuse and you have ongoing concerns, you should seriously consider issuing a Venue-Initiated Exclusion Order.*

### What you need to know about the exclusion process

*It's important that you follow your venue's exclusion process as set out in your venue's harm prevention and minimisation policy.*

Here are some reminders to help you with that process:

- Inform the gambler of the area in the venue they are excluded from.
- Agree on the length of the exclusion period. An exclusion order can be issued for any period of up to two years. A minimum of six months and a maximum of two years is recommended, depending on what will be in the best interests of the gambler. The time period is often agreed between the staff member completing the order and the gambler. If you are unsure about what the best length of time is, you can seek advice from your local gambling support service.
- Offer to put the gambler in touch with a local gambling support service.
- Staff must keep accurate and full records of any excluded gamblers. In addition, your venue should hold clear, accessible and secure photos of each excluded gambler. Please remember that any information, including photos provided by patrons, must not be able to be viewed by the public.



## Respond to concerns from a third party

*One of the most common indicators of problem gambling is when a relation, friend or family member of the gambler tells venue staff that they are concerned about the gambler.*

- It's a good idea to familiarise yourselves with the photos at the start of each shift. This way you can keep an eye out for any gamblers that are excluded from your venue.
- It's also good practice for your venue to have some means of keeping staff updated about who exclusion orders have been issued to, exclusion orders that are due to expire, and any further actions or observations required. Use your staff meetings to review exclusion orders and discuss how to handle the customer if they return to the venue.

### Fines

***The law takes breaches of exclusion orders very seriously. Any venue manager or person acting on their behalf that fails to exclude a self-identified problem gambler or fails to remove an excluded person may be convicted and fined up to \$5,000. An excluded person can be convicted and fined up to \$500 for entering the gambling area.***

If a person (other than the gambler) raises concerns about a gambler, it's good practice to:

- Ask for the name, description of the gambler and any behaviours they are concerned about. Remember, it's not appropriate for you to reveal any details you have about the gambler with the person making the request, without the gambler's permission to do so.
- Advise the person making the request that the venue has a harm minimisation policy. Explain that the venue staff will assess the person's behaviour against this policy and approach them if their behaviour indicates potential harm arising from gambling. If you or other staff know the gambler, you may wish to say that the gambler will be approached and provided with problem gambling information.
- Provide the person raising the concern with a harm minimisation wallet leaflet and let them know that it's free for them to contact the support services on the back.
- Thank them for talking to you about their concerns and assure them that the information they provide will be treated in confidence.

➤ For more information visit  
[choicenotchance.org.nz/gamblehostpack](http://choicenotchance.org.nz/gamblehostpack)

INTERNAL AFFAIRS



*Te Tari Taiwhenua*

