

Advice for parents and carers - signs of problem gambling

Some signs that your son or daughter may have a gambling problem include:

- Spends lots of time gambling and thinking about gambling.
- Misses school or grades start to worsen because of time spent gambling.
- Starts to place larger and more frequent bets to maintain interest and excitement produced by gambling.
- Experiences mood swings and feels stressed when not gambling regularly or trying to reduce or stop gambling.
- Promises to stop or reduce their gambling but has trouble following through with plan.
- Lies or is secretive about gambling activities.
- Missing personal belongings or cannot cover regular expenses as s/he has used these to finance gambling activities.
- Borrows or takes money from family members or friends to gamble.
- Keeps on gambling because they believe that s/he can win back their money and stop.
- Gambles as a means of escape or to forget their problems.
- Family members or friends are concerned that your son/daughter's gambling will become serious.

It is important to note that an individual with gambling problems will not necessarily exhibit all these behaviours.

If I think my child may have a gambling problem what should I do?

Remember that the first thing you can do as a parent is to talk to your child. Communicating with your child or young person begins with listening. As a preventive measure you can talk to them about gambling to make sure they understand the risks that can occur when gambling.

Encouraging conversation about gambling does not mean that you agree with the behaviour. In reality, it can help your child make informed decisions about their own behaviour.

Be aware that children are more likely to gamble if they observe their family members gambling or they hear their family members talking excitedly about gambling. Discussing with your child that gambling is a form of entertainment and not a good way to make money can help them understand that, in addition to being fun, there are risks to gambling. Limiting or eliminating gambling activities in the home (for example, playing poker for money) and replacing these with non-gambling family activities can help create a fun and healthy family environment.

If you think your child is gambling or gambling too much you have many options including seeking professional help. Here are some general steps to following:

- Get informed about gambling and its risks.
- Be aware of your own gambling behaviour and beliefs.
- Encourage discussion and questions about gambling.
- Listen to what your child has to say.
- Set limits of time, money and frequency of gambling if problems are not severe.
- Seek professional assistance (Gambling Help Line 18000 858 858 or www.gamblinghangover.nsw.gov.au if you think the problem is severe).