

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania maintains

24-hour Gambling Helplines: 1-800-848-1880 or 1-800-GAMBLER

This resource provides confidential information and support to people with gambling problems, or to those who are concerned about a friend or colleague or family member.

For more information about resources available for you or a co-worker in your area, please call us.

In Pennsylvania:
1-800-848-1880 or 1-800-GAMBLER



Council on
Compulsive Gambling
of Pennsylvania

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GAMBLING.

What to do when you think a co-worker has a problem.

Gambling.



For most, it's a harmless pastime. But for others, it's a real problem.

Gambling's a popular form of recreation in Pennsylvania. You, your friends or co-workers may participate in the office pool, buy an occasional raffle ticket or drop a few dollars on lottery tickets. Most people who take part in these activities do not develop a gambling problem.

However, for about three to five percent of adults in Pennsylvania, gambling is a problem. It may be an isolated case of getting carried away or overspending. Or it may be an ongoing problem with continual losses and mounting debts. At the extreme end of this range is pathological gambling, where people are unable to control their gambling, much like alcoholics are unable to control their drinking.

The negative effects of problem gambling can extend into the workplace. A problem gambler may be too distracted to focus on work, or may be able to schedule work in a way to accommodate gambling. A gambler may take extended lunch hours and may even use company funds to gamble or cover debts.

Signs of potential gambling problems.

- Borrowing money frequently
- Continually boasting about winnings
- Complaining about debts more than usual
- Spending increasing amounts of time gambling during lunch hours or after work

- Experiencing drastic mood swings
- Making an unusually high number of personal phone calls
- Allowing work performance to deteriorate, such as being distracted, missing deadlines and having frequent or unexplained absences
- Exhibiting personality changes, such as being irritable, secretive or downright dishonest

What can you do to help a problem gambler?

If you think a friend or a colleague has a gambling problem, you may feel reluctant to say something to the person involved. It's awkward to bring up personal issues in the workplace and money is a particularly sensitive subject area. However, it is possible to express your concerns in a caring manner.

Before you express your concerns, it helps to be clear about your role. As a concerned colleague, you can simply share your observations with your co-worker. What you shouldn't do is try to diagnose the problem, provide advice or expect any sign that your co-worker has accepted your expression of concern.

The outcome is difficult to predict, ranging from gratitude to denial to hostility. It may result in immediate action or it might be one of several messages that eventually motivate your colleague to seek help. Whatever happens, you've provided your co-worker with essential information and support.

Suggestions to help express your concerns.

1. Be clear, non-judgmental, and speak only for yourself.
"I've noticed some changes in your work and I'm worried about you."
2. Use work-related observations.
"I see you coming back late from lunch every day, too distracted to work."
3. Be positive.
"Your work is usually so good, and you always meet your deadlines."
4. Explain how the problem affects you.
"I've had to finish two of your projects. I had to cover your absence last Monday afternoon."
5. Be clear about your position.
"I can't cover up for you any more, and I won't lend you any more money."
6. Respect personal boundaries.
"I don't want to pry into your life, but I have to let you know I am concerned."
7. Provide information, not advice.
"The Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania provides pamphlets that might interest you. They also have a hotline for more information."
8. Be prepared for denial or a hostile reaction.
"It must be uncomfortable to hear this. It's difficult for me too, but I'm concerned about you."