

# SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS

A customer who is experiencing gambling-related harm is likely to display a number of the following signs and behaviours. These have been categorised in terms of severity to assist staff in observing and responding to customers exhibiting multiple gambling behaviours before the customer has asked for help.

### EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- ♦ Tries obsessively to win on one machine
- ♦ Rushes from one machine to another
- ♦ Rummages around in purse or wallet for additional money
- ♦ Asks to change large notes before gambling
- ♦ Significant increase in spending pattern

### POSSIBLE GAMBLING PROBLEMS

- ♦ Gambles most days: starts gambling when the venue is opening and/or only stops when the venue is closing
- ♦ Uses coin machines at least four times
- ♦ Has run out of money when he/she leaves the venue
- ♦ Spends \$300 or more in a session and/or betting \$2.50 or more per spin most of the time
- ♦ Gambles on two or more machines at once
- ♦ Complains to staff about losing, or blames the venue or machines for losing
- ♦ Rituals or superstitious behaviours such as rubbing the belly of a machine or screen, talking to the machine, and/or the use of lucky charms

## WHAT TO DO

If you see a customer that is displaying several gambling harm signs, it is important to remember your role is not to diagnose gambling problems but to respond appropriately, minimise customer harm and enhance customer safety. Take appropriate action including monitoring the customer's behaviour, recording what you have seen in an incident register, and reporting concerns to your supervisor and manager.

## IF YOU THINK AN EXCLUDED PERSON IS IN THE VENUE

Conduct a client search in the *Tasmanian Gambling Exclusion Scheme* (TGES) database, and confirm the type of exclusion they have. Approach the person with a smile, introduce yourself and ask to see their identification. If the person is excluded, quietly ask them to leave. If you don't feel confident, ask for a manager or supervisor's help.

### GAMBLING PROBLEMS PROBABLE

- ♦ Finds it difficult to stop gambling at closing time
- ♦ Gambles right through normal meal times
- ♦ Leaves the venue to find money to continue gambling
- ♦ Puts large wins back into the machine
- ♦ Often gambles for long periods (three or more hours) without a proper break
- ♦ Plays very fast and gambles intensely without reacting to what's going on around him/her
- ♦ Shows signs of distress during or after gambling (looking sad/depressed, crying, holding head in hands, nervous/edgy, shaking, sweating)
- ♦ Gets angry while gambling (kicking and/or hitting the machines, swearing, grunting or groaning, playing roughly/aggressively)
- ♦ Becomes angry or stands over others if someone takes their favourite machine or spot
- ♦ Avoids contact or conversation with others

### GAMBLING PROBLEMS HIGHLY PROBABLE

- ♦ Is rude or impolite to venue staff or other customers
- ♦ Witnessed or heard trying to borrow money from other people at the venue, or asking for credit from the venue
- ♦ Generally poor hygiene and/or significant decline in personal grooming or appearance over several days (body odours, dirty or unchanged clothes, messy/greasy hair)
- ♦ Conceals presence at venue (doesn't answer mobile phone, takes or makes calls outside of the venue, asks staff not to let others know they are there, people contact or visit the venue looking for the person).