IPGGC

CORE COMPETENCIES

Industry RG Training

Defining the knowledge and skills required of gambling industry professionals to prevent and reduce gambling-related harm.

INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION BIOS

These are the committee members that contributed to the development of the competencies. IPGGC is very grateful for all their work and contributions.

Jo Abergel is the Co-Founder of the Ethical Gambling Forum and Founder of Rock Learning, a Gibraltar-based, ILM Recognised Learning & Development Consultancy. She has worked with the gambling industry for the past 15 years, primarily providing leadership training for industry leaders and executive coaching for C-level professionals. Jo has organized numerous courses and conferences in Safer Gambling, Suicide Awareness, Sustainability, and Workplace Inclusion, and has spoken at many international gambling conferences. A former youth worker and past Chairperson of Childline Gibraltar, she gained first-hand experience supporting young people and families impacted by addiction, mental health issues, and abuse.

Šimon Vincze is Casino Guru's Head of Sustainable & Safer Gambling and an advocate for Responsible Gambling. He provides expert guidance on player protection, helps steer the company toward current best practices, and seeks opportunities for Casino Guru to have a positive influence. Šimon is dedicated to making gambling more sustainable and secure for all involved parties, prioritizing legitimate entertainment with acknowledged risks for players while ensuring operators uphold their responsibility.

Christina Cook, IGRS, is a lived experience advocate, peer support professional, and founder of The Broke Girl Society, a peer-led recovery community for women impacted by gambling harm. Her work is grounded in personal recovery, peer engagement, and advocacy focused on reducing stigma and expanding access to recovery-informed support. Through community building, public speaking, podcasting, and systems-level collaboration, Christina brings a lived experience perspective to conversations about gambling-related harm, recovery pathways, and the development of responsive, person-centered support services.

Julie Hynes, MA, CPS, IGDC, is Director of Responsible Gaming at DraftKings, where she leads employee training, customer-facing messaging, and responsible play education strategies. Prior to joining DraftKings, she served as Executive Director of the Oregon Council on Problem Gambling and as Director of Responsible Gambling at the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health. Julie also led the PreventionLane problem gambling prevention program and was an instructor at the University of Oregon. Her work has been recognized by the National Council on Problem Gambling with the Wuelfing Award for Prevention and the Don Hulen Award for Advocacy & Awareness.

Sherene Fernando is Associate Director, Advisory Services at the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC), where she leads the Advisory Services team and works closely with operators, regulators, and stakeholders to strengthen responsible gambling practices worldwide. With 15 years of experience in the field, she specializes in strategy and policy development, program evaluation, and the design of practical, evidence-based training and prevention initiatives. Her work spans both land-based and online gambling environments and focuses on improving staff engagement, informed player decision-making, and organizational RG culture. Sherene is known for bridging research and practice to support safer gambling environments and more resilient player protection systems.

Dr. Maris Catania is a Chartered Psychologist with over 15 years in the gambling industry, specializing in game integrity and safer gambling. She is currently the Director of Player Sustainability at LeoVegas, leading efforts in sustainable gambling and player protection. Previously, she was a Senior Safer Gaming Consultant at SG:certified, developing evidence-based training and strategies. Before that, as Head of Responsible Gaming and Research at Kindred, she led the responsible gambling strategy and co-developed the Player Safety – Early Detection System (PS-EDS) with Karim Chikh. Dr. Catania holds a PhD from Nottingham Trent University, an MSc in Occupational Psychology, an MSc in Addiction Studies, and is pursuing an MSc in Artificial Intelligence. Her research on responsible gambling has won a significant industry award for three consecutive years. She also lectures at the University of Malta on gambling psychology and related topics. Her research is available on ResearchGate.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

These competencies are divided into two levels. The basic training is aimed at all gambling industry staff. Those in customer-facing roles will additionally need to complete Level 2 competencies, which are detailed in the greyed boxes in this document as shown below.

LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING

This is an example of customer-facing Level 2 competencies. They contain deeper, hands-on content: response procedures, escalation protocols, communication scripts, scenario practice, risk models.

Note that competencies in light color & italics are considered desirable rather than essential as shown below.

This is an example of desirable competencies. This is not essential.

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1. Definition, history and main principles of responsible gambling

A shared, systems-level approach to preventing and minimizing gambling-related harm; Creating gambling environments where people can make informed choices, risks are minimized, and harm is actively prevented and addressed.

This includes:

- Designing gambling systems that support safer play by default
- Providing clear information, tools, and supports
- Ensuring regulation puts public safety and wellbeing first
- Shifting focus from individual failure to shared responsibility

Requires:

- Evidence-based policy and practice
- Research-informed safeguards
- Collaboration across operators, regulators, community members and service providers
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement of protections

1.1 - Gambling carries inherent risk

- Helping individuals make informed choices, understand risks, and avoid behaviours that could lead to harm.
- Ensuring there is information and access to help and resources, if needed
- Building trust and credibility with customers and regulators
- Supporting sustainable growth by creating safe, positive gambling environments
- Meeting regulatory requirements across channels
- Reflecting organizational values around safety, accountability, and ethical practice

1.2 Responsible Gambling is for everyone. Intervention varies depending on level of risk.

Responsible gambling is about meeting players where they are: promoting informed, balanced play for most, and supporting stronger protective actions when needed.

For most players, responsible gambling means:

- Keeping play fun and low-risk
- Setting limits on time and money
- Understanding how games and odds work
- Treating gambling as entertainment—not income
- Staying within personal limits

The approach should be both preventative and supportive:

- Focus on prevention first through clear education and practical tools
- Reduce the likelihood of harm before it starts
- Provide assistance to anyone who may need help
- Use every interaction as an opportunity to promote safe, enjoyable play

For individuals experiencing gambling-related harm or gambling disorder:

- Responsible gambling may mean:
- Choosing not to gamble at all
- Using stronger protective tools, such as self-exclusion or account blocks
- Accessing support and treatment resources

1.3 Why Responsible Gambling is important to the company?

- Work with products that carry inherent risk
- Help people make informed choices, understand risks, and avoid behaviours that could lead to harm.
- Ensures there is information and access to help and resources, if needed
- Builds trust and credibility with customers and regulators
- Supports sustainable growth by creating safe, positive gambling environments
- Meets regulatory requirements across channels

- Reflects organizational values around safety, accountability, and ethical practice
- Help staff to be better informed of risks and harms, increase confidence in being able to appropriately respond and/or escalate

1.3.1 Protects and Enhances Company Image

- Strengthens brand trust and credibility
- Counters the industry's negative perception of prioritizing profit over player well being
- Signals seriousness and integrity to investors, regulators, and the public

1.3.2 Drives Sustainable Gambling and Long Term Profitability

- Encourages long term, stable player engagement; players gamble within their means
- Reduces volatility associated with harmful play patterns
- Supports sustainable operations in both land based and online markets

1.3.3 Improves Player Retention and Customer Loyalty

- Informed players make safer choices and enjoy longer-term recreation
- Staff trained in Responsible Gambling can better support players, building trust
- Safe-play environments encourage repeat visitation and positive word of mouth

1.3.4 Slows Player Spend in a Positive, Sustainable Way

- Sustainable spend → longer customer lifecycle
- Prevents burnout, financial harm, and player loss
- Aligns with ESG expectations and supports future revenue stability

1.3.5 Reduces Company Exposure to Risk, Fines & Regulatory Penalties

- Regulators increasingly scrutinize RG compliance
- Non compliance damages brand reputation
- Penalties may directly impact profitability and share value

1.3.6. Strengthens Internal Culture & Employee Satisfaction

- Improved staff confidence and capability; Employees take pride in working for an organization that cares about player wellbeing and operates ethically.
- Higher retention and lower turnover
- Stronger alignment with organizational mission
- Employee longevity

1.4. Regulation - how it drives Responsible Gambling and how some companies exceed regulatory requirements. General overview of regulation, unregulated markets and gambling-adjacent markets.

Regulatory frameworks establish the baseline expectations that licensed gambling operators must meet to protect players and reduce gambling-related harms. They ensure that basic player protections are in place, but on its own, regulation does not guarantee effective harm prevention or a strong Responsible Gambling culture.

These requirements typically include:

- mandatory RG policies and procedures
- staff training obligations
- self-exclusion programs
- controls on marketing, advertising, and inducements
- safeguards related to access to money and game design

Generally, regulation drives RG in three key ways:

1.4.1 It creates accountability.

Licensing conditions, audits, and enforcement mechanisms require operators to demonstrate that RG policies are not only written, but implemented. This drives organizations to formalize training, document player support interactions, and maintain consistent processes.

1.4.2 It shapes operator priorities.

Regulatory focus areas—such as marketing conduct, self-exclusion, and protection of minors—directly influence where operators allocate resources.

1.4.3. It sets common expectations across the market.

Regulation creates a shared floor for player protection, ensuring that operators are not competing by lowering standards. This is especially important in highly competitive online markets, where commercial pressures can otherwise incentivize risky practices.

1.4.4 Strong RG programs go beyond compliance. Companies that exceed regulatory requirements typically:

- embed RG into corporate strategy, culture, and leadership KPIs—not just compliance functions
- adopt evidence-informed safeguards earlier than required by regulation
- strengthen staff training beyond minimum requirements, focusing on confidence, empathy, and real-world decision-making
- implement more robust player tools (limits, breaks, proactive messaging) than regulators mandate
- develop internal marketing and product standards that are stricter than legislation

Operators that exceed regulation tend to view RG as a risk-management, reputational, and sustainability issue rather than a box-ticking exercise.

1.5 Gambling-Adjacent Markets

1.5.1 Foundational understanding of gambling vs non-gambling in regulatory landscape (regulated operators, non-regulated spaces, e.g., sweepstakes casinos, pick'em, predictions markets)

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1.5.2 Gambling-related risk extends beyond traditional casinos and sportsbooks into gambling-adjacent spaces, including:

- Affiliates and third-party marketers
- Influencer and social-media promotion
- Sports and entertainment environments
- Digital products that blur the line between gaming and gambling (e.g., social casinos, freemium games)
- Sweepstakes products
- "Pick'em" products
- Predictions markets

These spaces are often less clearly regulated, creating gaps where gambling messaging can reach consumers without the same safeguards applied to licensed operators. These adjacent markets require:

- clearer accountability across the supply chain
- education and training for marketing, media, and affiliate partners
- alignment between Responsible Gambling principles and commercial partnerships

2. Understanding and reducing stigma associated with gambling-related harms

Stigma around gambling-related harms arises when individuals experiencing harm are blamed, judged, or stereotyped. Research shows that stigma often stems from beliefs that gambling problems are purely a matter of personal responsibility or moral failing. People experiencing harm are frequently labelled as "impulsive," "irrational," or "lacking self-control," which leads to shame, silence, and avoidance of help-seeking. It is important to note that the behavior does not define the individual.

Stigma is also shaped by social factors such as concealability, cultural norms, and perceived disruptiveness of the condition. When gambling harm is hidden or heavily taboo, people are less likely to talk about it or access support. This is particularly pronounced in racialized and immigrant communities, where cultural shame and fear of judgment act as significant barriers. Some cultural groups experience gambling harms at higher rates but are less likely to seek help — not because support is not needed, but because stigma suppresses disclosure, encourages secrecy, and normalizes silence.

Consider the language used and terms you may need to avoid because they reinforce shame; using "gambling harms" or "negative impacts" can reduce stigma by shifting focus away from blame and toward health and wellbeing.

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How to Reduce/Minimize Stigma:

2.1.1 Shift the narrative from blame to health.

Move away from framing gambling harms as a personal weakness. Instead, emphasize that gambling harms are a public health issue influenced by products, environments, and systemic factors — not just individual choices. This reduces self-blame and increases willingness to seek help

2.1.2 Use non-stigmatizing, inclusive language.

Consider language used and replace labels like "problem gambler" with "people experiencing gambling harm." Avoid language that implies character flaws. Consider "gambling-related harms" instead of "problem gambling."

2.1.3 Increase culturally sensitive education and awareness.

Tailor messaging for communities where stigma is deeply rooted. Stigma is a persistent barrier in racialized communities, and culturally responsive tools improve both recognition and help-seeking.

2.1.4 Normalize conversations about gambling harms.

Public health frameworks recommend making discussions about gambling risk as routine as conversations about mental health or substance use. Visibility—through community partners, healthcare providers, and public campaigns—helps reduce fear of judgment.

2.1.5 Highlight recovery, support, and hope.

Research shows stigma decreases when people believe recovery is possible and help is accessible. Public communications should emphasize that many people experience harm and that effective support exists.

2.1.6 Address structural drivers of stigma.

Stigma is reinforced when systems, messaging, and policies imply personal fault. Ensuring Responsible Gambling programs, marketing, and staff communications avoid blame and instead promote understanding helps shift broader cultural perceptions

3. Understanding different types of players across the spectrum

The Player Spectrum helps us understand that not all players are the same. From new and casual players to those at risk or experiencing harm, each group has unique needs. By recognizing where a player may fall on the spectrum, staff can tailor communication, provide appropriate safer-play guidance, and offer the right level of support—ensuring every player receives information that keeps their play positive, safe, and enjoyable.

3.1 New to frequent players

Emphasizes that RG applies to all players, not just those experiencing harm, and that each group requires tailored communication and support.

3.1.1 New Players:

New players have little to no gambling experience. They are curious, often unsure how games work, and seek basic guidance.

Needs:

- Clear explanations of game rules and odds
- Foundational education on safe play
- Tips on setting boundaries early

3.1.2 Casual Players

These players gamble occasionally for fun. Their habits are still forming, and they are at an early stage of shaping long-term behaviours.

Needs:

- Reinforcement of healthy habits (limits, odds, randomness)
- Simple, relatable information
- Encouragement to maintain gambling as low-risk entertainment

3.1.3 Serious Social Players

For these players, gambling is a primary form of entertainment. They come more regularly and may have established patterns.

Needs:

- Continued relationship-building and regular check-ins
- Support to maintain balance and avoid habit escalation
- Reinforcement of safe-play tools (time/money limits, breaks)

3.1.4 At Risk Players

At-risk players exhibit early warning signs—spending more than intended, emotional reactions to losses, or gambling impacting other areas of life.

Needs:

- Increased staff awareness and active observation
- Gentle, supportive reminders and resources
- Encouragement toward safer habits or breaks when needed

3.1.5 Players Experiencing Gambling- Related Harm

These individuals may be showing clear signs of harm or distress. Their gambling is likely affecting finances, relationships, or wellbeing.

Needs:

- Compassionate, non-judgmental support
- Immediate guidance toward tools like self-exclusion
- Access to external support services and helplines

4. Understand game mechanics

4.1.1 House edge - Return To Player, the operator is designed to win over time

All gambling games have a house edge. This means the game is designed so that the casino or betting site will win more money than players over time. Players can win in the short term, but the odds always favour the house in the long run. Understanding this helps people gamble with realistic expectations and keep play safer and more affordable.

4.1.2 Randomness, odds

Randomness means that each gambling outcome is unpredictable and independent of previous outcomes.

Odds describe the likelihood of winning or losing a bet. They show how much a player might win relative to how much they wager—but they do not guarantee an outcome. Even with good odds, gambling outcomes are unpredictable and always favour the house in the long run.

4.1.3 Different risks in games (e.g. slots vs.single bets, bonus rounds)

Gambling Product Risk refers to the inherent characteristics of a gambling product that may increase the likelihood of excessive or harmful gambling behaviour. These risks can arise from features such as high event frequency, rapid betting cycles, continuous play, high volatility, or immersive design elements that encourage prolonged engagement. Products with higher risk profiles may enable faster financial losses, reduce natural pauses in play, or reinforce chasing behaviour, thereby increasing the potential for gambling-related harm if appropriate safeguards and responsible gambling measures are not in place.

5. Understand and identify gambling myths

Gambling myths are false beliefs about how gambling works.
They often arise from misunderstanding randomness, odds, and the house edge, and can lead players to make riskier decisions.

5.1 Common misconceptions

5.1.1 "I'm due for a win"

Myth: After losing several times, a win is guaranteed.
Reality: Gambling outcomes are random and independent. Past losses do not increase the chance of winning on the next bet.
This belief reflects the gambler's fallacy and is a key driver of chasing losses.

5.1.2 "If I keep playing, I'll win my money back"

Myth: Continuing to gamble will eventually recover losses.
Reality: Chasing losses often leads to larger losses and increased stress. The longer play continues, the more the house edge takes effect.

5.1.3 "There's a strategy or technique to beat the game"

Myth: Skill or special techniques can control outcomes in games like slots or roulette.
Reality: Most casino games are based on chance, not skill. Outcomes are determined by randomness, not player actions.

5.1.4 "The machine is hot or cold"

Myth: A machine that hasn't paid out is about to, or one that just paid out won't pay again.
Reality: Machines do not track past outcomes. Each spin is independent and random.

5.1.5 "The venue/operator is controlling or rigging the game"

Myth: The casino or staff can change outcomes to prevent wins.
Reality: Outcomes are controlled by regulated systems (e.g., Random Number Generators), not by staff or venue operators. No one can decide when a game pays out.

5.1.6 "Gambling is an easy way to make money"

Myth: Gambling can be relied on for income.
Reality: All gambling games include a house edge, meaning the operator is designed to win over time. Gambling is entertainment—not a financial strategy.

5.1.7 "Knowing the game guarantees better outcomes"

Myth: Experience or deep knowledge ensures winning.
Reality: While understanding rules supports informed decision-making, it does not change the odds or eliminate randomness. Wins are never guaranteed.
Knowledge helps manage risk—not control outcomes.

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5.2.1 Cognitive distortions among those prone to gambling-related harm:

- superstition
- illusion of control
- interpretive bias
- Gambler's Fallacy

5.3 Develop skills to respond to myths effectively

Addressing myths using clear, simple, and non-judgmental language helps normalize safe-play conversations and supports prevention-focused Responsible Gambling and reduces stigma. When myths are discussed respectfully, players are more likely to engage, absorb accurate information, and adjust expectations early—supporting prevention-focused Responsible Gambling and reinforcing RG as a natural part of positive customer service.

6. Higher Risk Groups

Certain demographics can lead to disproportionate levels of gambling-related harm, dependent on age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion/culture.

6.1.1 Young people and young adults

Often exhibit higher rates of gambling participation and harm compared with older demographics, linked to developmental factors like impulsivity and susceptibility to risk-taking.

> LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING
>
> **6.1.1** Peer norms, social media influence, easy access to online gambling via mobile devices, and blurred boundaries with gaming and loot box-like mechanics all contribute to exposure and potential escalation.
>
> *Emphasise how to sensitively ask about gambling behaviours with younger customers, especially those indicating stress, academic impacts, or financial strain.*

6.1.2 Older Adults

While older adults tend to gamble less frequently on average, when harm occurs it can have disproportionate impacts due to fixed income, cognitive decline, loneliness, or bereavement.

> LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING
>
> *Highlight subtle signs of harm (e.g., sudden financial difficulties, social isolation) and how to differentiate age-related risk from general patterns.*

6.1.3 Neurodiversity/Individuals with Mental Health Issues

Individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD and autism spectrum conditions, as well as other cognitive differences that can influence information processing, reward sensitivity, or impulsivity.

> LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING
>
> *Evidence suggests that neurodivergent individuals may experience more gambling-related harm, even if participation frequency is similar to neurotypical peers, potentially due to differences in executive function, impulsivity, decision-making styles, and processing of risk and reward.*
> *https://www.greo.ca/Modules/EvidenceCentre/Details/gambling-harms-and-neurodivergence-mapping-the-evidence-landscape*

Specific studies link traits associated with autism and impulsivity with higher gambling harm symptoms, underscoring the need to look beyond surface behaviour patterns. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/cns-spectrums/article/autistic-traits-in-young-adults-who-gamble/6B16D34071FAABD632859C51A0C7C724

6.1.4 Co-occurring issues

Co-occurring issues refers to psychological or behavioural conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use) that appear alongside harmful gambling behaviour and may interact to increase severity, persistence, or barriers to help-seeking.
Co-occurring issues can mask or exacerbate gambling harm, complicate motivation, and strengthen defensive responses. A strong body of research shows that gambling problems and other mental health conditions frequently co-occur, with complex, bidirectional relationships — for example, depression and anxiety disorders are common among people with disordered gambling, as are alcohol and drug use disorders.
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11980244/

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Provide some practical tips on how to spot/detect possibly co-occurring conditions and neurodiversity.

Clinical guidelines recommend systematically considering mental health and co-occurring conditions when screening or engaging with someone about gambling harms.https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng248/chapter/recommendations

Customers may present primarily with mood, stress, or substance-related complaints while gambling harm is secondary but central. (Note if they disclose they are in recovery for another matter and still looking for dopamine hit somewhere else).

6.1.5 Other high risk groups related to jurisdiction where training is delivered

For example tribal gaming, indigenous group

7. Recognizing and responding to signs/red flags

Recognising signs/red flags means identifying behavioural, financial, emotional, and communication indicators that suggest a player may be experiencing loss of control, escalating risk, or gambling-related harm, and responding appropriately and consistently.

7.1.1 Markers of Harm

Markers of harm are observable patterns that indicate increased likelihood of gambling harm. They are not “proof” of addiction; they’re risk signals that warrant attention. Note that there will be observable differences depending on whether the operator is land-based or online.

7.1.2 Examples of Markers to cover

Increasing time spent gambling (long sessions, late-night play)
Increased frequency of play (more days active, shorter breaks)
“Binge-style” gambling (high intensity in short windows)
Chasing & loss recovery patterns
Financial stress indicators (e.g. affordability, deposit stacking, failed deposits, sudden change in spend)
Tool-related indicators (e.g. setting/removing/changing limits)
Communication & Behavioural Cues

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Behavioural intensity and escalation
Increasing stakes and volatility (sudden stake jumps, riskier products)
Switching products rapidly (especially after losses)

Financial stress indicators:

Depositing shortly after significant losses
Language like “I just need one win”, “I can’t stop now”, “I have to win it back” (Spiralling)
Affordability
Repeated deposits in a short time (“deposit stacking”)
Failed deposits / payment declines
Reversal behaviours (attempts to cancel withdrawals)
Sudden change in spend
Unusual urgency around winnings/withdrawals

Tool-related indicators:

Setting/removing/changing limits repeatedly
Multiple time-outs without longer-term stabilisation

Communication & Behavioural Cues:

Irritability, desperation, hostility, panic
Bargaining and pressure tactics ("I'll never do it again if you reopen it")
Shame/avoidance ("Don't judge me", "I don't want to talk about it")

Behavioural analysis - what to include:

Trend-based interpretation: harm often shows up as change over time, not one isolated event.
Patterns matter more than single events
e.g., one big deposit ≠ harm, but repeated high deposits after losses (or a win) may be.
New player risk vs established player deviation from baseline
Harm detection improves when systems look at clusters (e.g., chasing + long sessions + payment declines).

For online operators:

Prediction models (risk scoring)
Risk models estimate likelihood of harm using transactional data (deposits, stakes, net loss), behavioural patterns (session length, intensity), product exposure (high-speed/high-risk formats) & RG tool usage patterns

Explain the principle that models support decision-making, they don't replace it.
Models can produce false positives/negatives → staff judgement still matters

Model governance points:

- *transparency and explainability (why flagged)*
- *audit trails and documentation*
- *bias awareness (avoid unfair targeting or missed risk groups)*

For land-based operators specifically:
Visible signs of distress
Fatigue
Declining hygiene, ignoring biological needs
Yelling/swearing at staff/others
Multiple trips to the ATM/Cashier

Ignoring social crowd
Language like "I just need one win", "I can't stop now", "I have to win it back" (Spiralling)

7.1.3 Mention response procedures, including escalation guidelines, role-specific responsibilities. What is and what is not expected (signposting to professional services if required).

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Response procedures are a structured set of actions that ensure consistency, compliance, and safety, from first detection to resolution.

There should be a tiered response approach.
Low concern → nudge + tool suggestion
Moderate concern → targeted interaction + encourage limits/time-out
High concern → stronger intervention (cool-off, restriction, mandatory review, account suspension)
Critical concern → immediate safeguarding steps (suspension, urgent escalation, crisis support, account closure)

Escalation guidelines
Clear triggers for escalation (examples will vary depending on jurisdiction and vertical):
Repeated distress messages
Explicit disclosure of loss of control
Evidence of severe chasing / extreme spend
Threats of self-harm or harm to others (critical escalation)

Time expectations
Clear timeframes should be set for escalation responses by operator. *For example, what is expected to happen immediately/within 30 minutes versus what is expected to happen within 24-48 hours.*

Role-specific responsibilities
Set clear expectations to define "who does what" so nobody freezes or oversteps.
Consider & plan escalation procedures in times of low staff cover (e.g. nighttime shifts for online operators)

7.1.3.1 Competencies for specific teams

Customer Support Team
Identify cues, respond empathetically, apply basic procedures

Provide tools + signposting
Document accurately and escalate when needed
Not expected: therapy, financial advice, diagnosing addiction

RG / Safer Gambling Teams
Review risk cases, decide interventions, apply restrictions
Ensure consistency and documentation
Manage high-risk and repeat cases
Not expected: clinical treatment
VIP/HVP/Account Management Teams
Must follow RG boundaries
Avoid incentivising continued play during risk
Must escalate and comply with restrictions
Not expected: negotiating RG decisions or "overriding" safeguards

Compliance / MLRO (where relevant)
Oversight of process adherence, evidence trails, audit readiness
Not expected: managing customer emotional support

7.1.4 Signposting and professional services

Operators should provide clarity to staff on when external support is necessary. Staff provide support + information + tools + referrals.

Examples of when external professional services are required:
The player requests clinical help
There are serious mental health concerns
Safeguarding risk is present
The customer is unable to stabilise despite tools/interventions

8. Self-exclusion & Responsible Gambling Tools

RG tools are protective features designed to reduce harm by limiting:

Access (ability to gamble)
Time (duration/intensity)
Money (spend and losses)

For land-based operators: Advise customers of the RG Tools available to them.

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8.1 If player requests information (e.g. “What tools do you have?”, “Can you show my losses/time spent?”, “How do I self-exclude?”, “What support exists?”)

Provide clear guidance on any support you can offer, such as:
Deposit limits, time-outs, self-exclusion
Account history and reality checks / statements
Where to find safer gambling pages/assistance with gambling venue
Offer choices, not commands (“Would you like me to guide you through setting a deposit limit now?”)

8.2 If a player is in distress, which may present as panic, anger, shame, urgency, hopelessness.

Acknowledge emotion without escalating
Slow the pace of interaction
Prioritise immediate safety and stabilisation
Offer a concrete next step (tool + break + support resource)

8.3 If player discloses gambling harm:

Examples: “I think I have a gambling addiction”, “I can’t stop”, “I’ve lost too much”, “My family doesn’t know”

Respond with validation and support
Recommend immediate protective steps (time-out / self-exclusion)
Offer signposting to specialist help
Escalate internally for review and follow-up consistency
Document disclosure carefully (neutral language, factual)

Important boundary:
Avoid asking for unnecessary personal details
Avoid implying the operator is a clinical service
Do not debate or challenge the disclosure

8.4 Effective communication skills; non-judgmental, empathetic responses.

Effective RG communication reduces defensiveness and increases the likelihood of reflection, tool uptake, and safer decisions.

What "good" sounds like:
Neutral, calm, respectful tone
Short and clear sentences
Supportive language ("Thank you for telling me", "You're not alone", "We can help you put protections in place")

What to avoid:
Blame: "Why did you do that?"
Minimising: "Just stop gambling"
Moralising: "You should know better"
Using overly robotic compliance language when the player is distressed

Micro-skills to include
Reflective listening ("It sounds like this is feeling overwhelming.")
Permission-based support ("Would it be okay if I suggest a couple of options?")
Choice architecture (offer 2–3 realistic next steps)
Grounding the player in actions (tools + time-out + resources)
Exploring safety plan ("are you alone now?"), immediate steps to remove danger
Understanding when confidentiality may need to be breached (e.g immediate danger to life)

Opportunities to practise skill development, role-play, scenarios
RG conversations are emotionally loaded. Staff often know the policy but struggle with delivery under pressure.

Examples of scenario types to include:
Customer chasing and refusing limits
Angry customer demanding reopening after time-out
Player disclosing debt or relationship breakdown
VIP customer with high spend + defensiveness
Customer asking "Am I a problem gambler?"\customer in crisis language (and how to escalate)

Skills to practise:
Opening lines that reduce defensiveness
How to offer tools without sounding punitive
How to end conversations safely
Documentation practice (what to write, what not to write)

8.5 Self-exclusion & RG Tools

8.5.1 Access Controls. Examples:

Self-exclusion (fixed period)
Account closure (with safeguards)
Product blocking (e.g., slots-only block)
Cooling-off / time-out
Login restrictions / forced breaks

Key points to cover:
Self-exclusion must be easy to activate, hard to reverse
Reactivation should include friction and review
Staff should never "sell" reopening as a customer service win

8.5.2 Time controls. Examples:
Session limits
Reality checks (time reminders + spend summaries)
Mandatory breaks (forced pauses)
Night-time restriction options (where possible)

Key points to cover:
Time limits are most useful when paired with reflection prompts
Reality checks should show meaningful info (e.g. time spent, net spend, deposits, patterns)

8.5.3 Money controls. Examples:
Deposit limits
Loss limits (where available)
Wager limits (stake caps)
Withdrawal lockouts / friction for reversing withdrawals (policy dependent)

Key points to cover:
Limits work best when set early (pre-commitment), are difficult to increase instantly (cooling-off on increases) and emphasise sustainability over "affordability theatre"

8.5.4. Create realistic marketing and communicate risks clearly to players.

Avoid messaging that implies gambling is a way to solve financial problems
Clearly communicate that gambling outcomes are random, the house edge exists and jackpots are rare. "Winning back losses" is not a strategy.

8.5.4.1 incentives must never override harm indicators
Give clarity around bonus terms and wagering requirements to reduce harmful chasing driven by misunderstanding.

9. Support and resources

Note the broad range of external support resources available, particularly non traditional resources.

Examples of low-barrier supports which can be useful for players not ready for formal treatment:
Wellbeing apps (habit change, mindfulness, blockers)
Blocking software/device restrictions
Podcasts and recovery stories
Peer support Communities
Financial counselling/literacy & Debt support Charities
Self-help workbooks and structured recovery programs

LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING

Support resources are internal and external pathways that help players reduce harm, access treatment, and rebuild control. These will vary by jurisdiction and it is important operators are familiar with support resources in the places where their customers reside.

9.1 Internal resources:
RG team contact pathways
Account tools and statements
Educational resources
Follow-up options after intervention (where applicable)
Supporting jackpot winners to set protections immediately after a major win
Helping players stabilise through limit-setting and time-outs

9.2 External Resources:
Professional services
National gambling help services / helplines
Counselling and therapy
Addiction services
Mental health crisis support

9.3 Supporting concerned third-parties

A concerned third party is someone contacting the operator because they believe another person is being harmed by gambling. Attention should be paid to honoring privacy whilst providing resources.

Key points to include:
Third-party reports are valuable safeguarding signals

Confidentiality boundaries:
You may not confirm account details but you can still record concerns and trigger internal review

What you can do:
Provide general RG information
Advise on external support resources
Encourage the third party to seek support for themselves too

Emotional support guidance:
Validate their concern
Keep it practical and structured
Avoid making promises you can't keep

10. Employee well-being, self care

Employee wellbeing in Responsible Gambling is about protecting frontline staff from emotional fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma that can come from repeated exposure to distress, crisis language, conflict, and moral pressure.

Employees as a high-risk group - note higher risk of gambling harm amongst industry staff.

LEVEL 2 — CUSTOMER-FACING

10.1 Employees handling RG interactions can experience:

Compassion fatigue (reduced emotional capacity over time)
Secondary traumatic stress (absorbing distress from others)
Moral injury (feeling forced to choose between targets vs safeguarding)
Emotional spillover into home life (especially after crisis interactions)
Burnout from high volume + high responsibility decisions

This is particularly relevant for customer support agents, RG analysts reviewing severe cases, VIP teams under competing pressures and anyone handling safeguarding escalation.

10.1.1. Key points to establish:
Boundaries and psychological safety
Clarity around “what is expected / not expected”
Permission to escalate and step away when overwhelmed
No blame culture for raising concerns

10.1.2 Debriefing:
Structured debrief after high-intensity cases
Access to line manager support and/or wellbeing champions
Cultivate peer support culture (without breaching confidentiality)

10.1.3 Practical self-care strategies (workplace-based):
Rotation of high-intensity duties
Micro-breaks after difficult interactions
Scripts/templates to reduce cognitive load
Training in de-escalation to reduce emotional strain