

EDITION 76 - AUTUMN 2020

NEWSLETTER

BY FAMILIES, FOR FAMILIES

FAMILY DRUG HELP
We've been there



FAMILY GAMBLING HELP

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Family Drug Help newsletter in which we excited to promote Family Drug and Gambling Help.

There is increasing community awareness of the harm caused by gambling. According to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation 1 in 5 Victorians who gamble may be experiencing harm from their gambling. As with alcohol and other drugs, we know that up to 5 to 10 people, often family members, are affected by gambling harm. The total cost of gambling to the Victorian community in 2014–2015 was \$7 billion.

Gambling harm is not siloed; it can co-occur with substance use, mental health issues, family violence, financial hardship and other public health issues. Family Drug Help has developed a number of supports to assist families impacted by gambling harm including a new website, www.familygamblinghelp.org.au. Visit the website to find out what we're doing in this space.

AIRwaves (Assistance, Information and Referral) is an exciting new SHARC program funded by Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to promote gambling harm prevention, providing the opportunity for this sensitive topic to be discussed and explored on radio in regional Victoria.

Shame and stigma are huge barriers for getting support, and Family Drug and Gambling Help is well placed to respond to this. We are staffed by trained volunteers with lived experience of the impact of substance use and gambling harm, and provide powerful peer support. Call us on 1300 660 068.

From all of us here at FDH.

Robert Campbell
Programme Manager
Family Drug Help

Dan told me his story while we were in treatment together. He had a beautiful family with his wife and two children, and it seemed like he had everything going for him. He told his story of his addiction to sports betting. It started when he was young. He bet all his money on a horse race. "Unfortunately for me, I won. I felt such an adrenaline rush and that was the beginning of the end for me. After I finished school, I worked for my dad's company selling property. We did very well and I was able to start a family and buy a beautiful house. My wife didn't even have to work. After a hard week's work, the weekend sport always warranted a bet or 10. It took me away from the family because I was so obsessed with the game.

When my wife used to challenge me about it, we would fight, so I started betting late at night instead. I would wait for the family to fall asleep, then sneak off. The betting started to spill over into the week and the more I won, the bigger the next bet. The time that was usually spent with friends, family and at work, turned into time spent in front of the TV or the computer. When I was winning, I won so much money, but then when I was on a losing streak, I lost everything we had.

My dad used to give me the company card to pay the workers' wages at the end of the month. I had lost so much money one month that I thought if I just bet all the money on the company card, I could double it and that would fix the problem. The odds were so good, that it was a sure thing... I ended up losing.

I ended up having to sell the house. My wife was furious at me. I had gambled away the kids' university fund. My dad didn't trust me with any of the company money and treatment was really my last resort."

He lost the family house...

He lost the wages money for his father's business...

Packing up the house and moving out had an impact on the kids as well...

The ripple out impact was on the whole family.

Student at SHARC



How you can tell if there's an issue

Today, gambling is everywhere. It's heavily promoted and widely accepted across all age groups. This means more people are exposed to it than ever before. People gamble for many reasons – for excitement, for the thrill of winning or to be social. It can often be hard to tell when it stops being fun and starts becoming a problem.

Gambling becomes a problem when it harms:

- mental or physical health
- work, school and other activities
- finances
- reputation
- relationships with family and friends

How does problem gambling start?

Someone may start gambling for fun, have some early wins, and then keep playing in the hope they'll win again and experience the same good feelings. However, when they begin to lose, particularly big losses, the cycle of problem gambling can start.

Gambling can be an escape for people who've experienced a stressful change in life, like illness or divorce, or who want to forget about life's worries, such as relationship issues or money troubles. Others may start playing the pokies because they're lonely and crave company. When people turn to gambling at vulnerable times in their lives, and it becomes a way for them to cope, it can lead to problem gambling.

Young people aged under 18 who've grown up in a home with a parent or grandparent with gambling issues have a higher risk than others of developing a gambling problem.

Even though there are no drugs or substances involved in gambling, problem gambling has a similar effect on the brain as drug and alcohol addiction.

How do you know if someone has a problem with gambling?

Apart from losing money, problem gambling affects a person's whole life and the lives of those close to them. If you're concerned about someone, look out for:



Money-related signs

- unexplained debt or borrowing
- money or assets disappearing
- numerous loans
- unpaid bills or disconnection notices
- lack of food in the house
- losing wallets or money regularly
- missing financial statements
- secret bank accounts, loans or credit cards

Interpersonal issues

- moodiness, unexplained anger
- depression
- decreased contact with friends
- family complaints about being emotionally shut out
- avoidance of social events
- control or manipulation by threat, lies or charm
- secretiveness about activities

Time-related signs

- disappearing for amounts of time that they cannot account for
- having no time for everyday activities
- overusing sick days and days off
- spending increased amounts of time on studying gambling
- taking an unusual amount of time for tasks (for example, taking two hours to get milk from the corner store)

Source: <https://www.gamblingtherapy.org/en>



Exposure of kids to gambling ads on TV

OCTOBER 2019

Research report: *Extent of, and children and young people's exposure to, gambling advertising in sport and non-sport TV*

Authors: Professor Kerry O'Brien and Dr Muhammad Iqbal, Monash University

What: The first study in the world to examine the extent of gambling advertising on sport TV and non-sport TV, and the extent to which young people in different age groups are exposed to it.

How: The researchers cross-referenced the timing and nature of gambling ads in Australia with official free-to-air TV audience data from 2016.

Key findings

In 2016, there were
136,918
 gambling ads on
 Australian free-to-air
 TV, with an average of
374 a day.



This is about five times the number of alcohol ads found in previous research.



On average, there were four times more gambling ads during sport TV vs non-sport TV. The sports programs that included the highest number of betting ads were:



AFL – 8866 ads



NRL – 4534 ads



cricket – 1888 ads



horse racing – 1571 ads

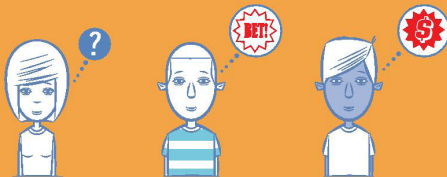


motor racing – 1372 ads



tennis – 1301 ads

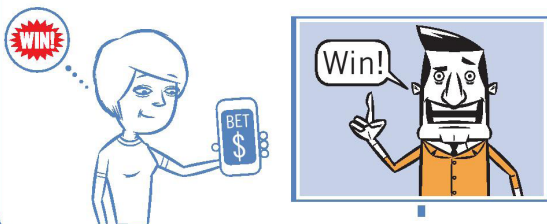
Two-thirds of the ads were played between 6.00am to 8.29pm. One-third were played after 8.30pm when large numbers of children and young people watch sport.



Number of exposures to gambling ads during sport by age group:

Age group	6.00am – 8.29pm	8.30pm – 11.59pm
Children aged 0–11 years	35,319,846	19,378,276
Adults aged 18–24	15,378,140	11,698,617
Adolescents aged 12–17	25,312,375	21,520,344

Australian and international research suggests there may be associations between exposure to gambling advertising and gambling behaviour.



Changes to the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice in 2015 included allowing gambling ads to be broadcast earlier in the day and PG-rated programs to be broadcast throughout the day. This led to a 55% increase in the number of gambling ads on free-to-air TV, of which 71% were broadcast during sport TV.

↑55%



71%

broadcast during sport TV.

To download this report, visit: responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au



How are Families Affected?

Money problems

The most common problem is the loss of money. Savings, property or belongings may suddenly be lost. This kind of money crisis makes the family feel scared, angry and betrayed.

Emotional problems and isolation

Gambling problems cause strong feelings. Family members may feel ashamed, hurt, afraid, angry, confused and distrustful. These feelings make it harder to solve problems. The person who gambles may even deny that there is a problem.

Physical and mental health

The stress of gambling problems sometimes causes health problems, for both the person who gambles and the family. This can include anxiety, depression and stress-related problems such as poor sleep, ulcers, bowel problems, headaches and muscle pains.

Burnout

Many families under stress have trouble coping. One member may try to keep things in control by taking on more tasks. This can lead to burnout. Family members often focus on the person with gambling problems, and forget to take care of themselves or to have fun.

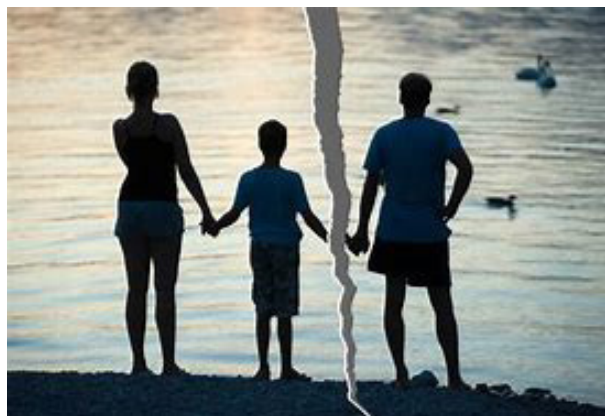
Physical and Emotional Abuse

Family violence is more common when families are in crisis. Gambling problems can lead to physical or emotional abuse of a partner, elder parent or child. Children may be hurt due to pent-up anger.

Impact on Children

When a parent or caregiver has a gambling problem, children are often affected; however, each child deals differently with the impacts of the problem. Some children can feel forgotten, depressed and angry. They may believe they caused the problem and that, if they are "good," the problem will stop. Some children take care of younger brothers or sisters, or try to support their parent. This responsibility causes children stress.

Source: www.problemgambling.ca/gambling-help/support-for-families/



Some Great News!

Family Drug and Gambling Help has been funded for our AIRwaves program by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation! We are speaking on radio stations across the state in 8 different regional areas. The focus of the program is to deliver a number of radio programs in collaboration with ABC regional and local FM radio stations to raise awareness about gambling harm for families, warning signs to look out for, and supports that are available.

It's about providing information to families in a safe environment without feeling stigma or shame.

Featuring experts, local services and family members with stories to share, AIRwaves will cover issues such as:

- How big a problem is gambling in our local community
- What are the signs to be aware of that gambling could be a problem
- Where to get local help and support
- What can we, as a community, do to prevent gambling harm

For other upcoming events and gambling support group info, please check our website!

Our other programs

We also offer the following free programs/services here at FDH:

- 24 hour Family Drug Helpline
- Support groups across Victoria
- Family counselling
- InFocus education program for families
- BreakThrough - ice education program for families
- Supper Club - for people who have lost a loved one from drug or alcohol use

Call our helpline for enquiries or bookings for any of the programs, including counselling, or go to www.familydrughelp.org.au for further information.



1 300 660 068



Interpreter service available



fdh@sharc.org.au

www.familygamblinghelp.org.au