A Stigma-Free Language Guide for HR Communications About Gambling

WORKPLACE WELLBEING

How we talk about gambling at work shapes whether employees come forward. Person-first language reduces shame and makes support feel reachable.

Person-First Language

SAY THIS	NOT THAT
'Person experiencing gambling harm' or 'person in recovery from a gambling addiction'	'Problem gambler' or 'gambling addict'
'The gambling' (avoid assigning blame to the individual)	'Your gambling'
'Gambling at a harmful level' (frame focuses on products and design, not character)	'Responsible vs. irresponsible gambling'
'At-risk' people (anyone exposed to harmful products can be affected)	'Vulnerable' people

WORDS AND PHRASES TO RETIRE FROM POLICY AND TRAINING

"Just a flutter," "safe gambling,""enjoy a bet": frames gambling as a positive social activity.

"A few bad apples," "they brought it on themselves": blames the person, not the design.

Comparisons like **"addict"** or **"problem person"**: defines someone by the harm.

Ridicule of wins or losses in team chats or all-hands meetings.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Stigma is one of the most common reasons people delay seeking help.
- Person-first framing improves disclosure to managers, EAP, and clinicians.
- Joking about gambling in team chats and all-hands meetings normalizes gambling and masks financial risk.

FOR EACH PERSON EXPERIENCING GAMBLING HARM, OTHERS ARE AFFECTED TOO

6+

People in a person's social network typically affected per individual harmed by gambling.

Anyone

All employees who gamble carry some level of risk; harm is not evenly distributed.

AUDIT YOUR EXISTING MATERIALS

Review your policy, training scripts, intranet copy, and manager talking points for stigmatizing language. One small wording change can be the reason an employee finally reaches out.

Sources: Words Can Hurt Language Guide, : National Council on Problem Gambling

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