

# Online Gambling: Intervention and Treatment

This document allows service providers to understand and tailor effective interventions for children and youth experiencing difficulties managing gambling. There is a lack of research on evidence-informed therapeutic modalities or best practice approaches for youth with problem gambling. Therefore, youth may be less likely to be identified and referred for treatment. In addition, most treatment approaches for youth have been modelled after problem gambling treatment programs for adults [1, 2]. This is cause for concern because services for adults are less likely to acknowledge the unique issues of young people and programs developed specifically for youth are more likely to be effective [3]. Nevertheless, providing treatment for underlying conditions, addiction counselling, and a recovery program tailored specifically to the client's needs and situation can help them understand why they gamble; therefore, they can modify their gambling patterns and achieve well-being.

The psychological treatments preferred by clinicians who serve children, youth and families with problem gambling include modalities such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness, motivational interviewing, psychoeducation, and solution-focused therapy [3]. Other effective therapies include dialectical behavioural therapy, psychodynamic therapy, trauma-informed care, family therapy, and the recovery model of treatment.

As an alternative to traditional approaches, the use of harm reduction is also a promising prevention and treatment approach that can be helpful in problem gambling. Harm reduction means not waiting for young people to have a gambling problem and rather, implementing prevention activities. There is still a lot of stigma around gambling, and those receiving treatment for gambling problems may experience shame. A harm reduction approach fights against harm, discrimination, and oppression; it favors positive change, as defined by the client. It is important to offer a person-centred treatment that focuses on the gambling disorder as the source of harm; responsible gambling messages are commonly used as a tool to enable informed choice and promote appropriate gambling behaviour [4].

Service providers may incorporate referral to housing services, inpatient or residential treatments, and social assistance services; they may also try to collaborate with other professionals involved in the case. Additionally, they may offer treatment that involves mutual help as tools to control gambling behaviours, such as attending online virtual mutual help meetings at Gambling Anonymous (GA) or Gamblers Anonymous (GAM-ANON), pre-commitment cards, and self-exclusion programs. These programs allow people to ban themselves from specific gambling venues or websites for a period of time. Combining GA attendance and psychotherapy is reported to be beneficial [5].

### References

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