

Responding to customers displaying signs of gambling harm

Your responsibility to customers

Under the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct:

'A venue operator has a duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent and minimise harm from the operation of gaming machines in the approved venue, including by monitoring the welfare of gaming machine players, discouraging intensive and prolonged gaming machine play and intervening when a person is displaying behaviour that is consistent with gambling harm.'

Your role is to provide a high level of customer service and a high level of customer care. Sometimes customers may become emotional or show distress in the venue, and it is crucial that they receive appropriate support.

How to respond to customers showing signs of distress

Customers may sometimes show signs of gambling harm in the venue and it is critical that these customers receive support.

Venue staff should approach the customer to offer appropriate support and suggest professional support options such as Gambler's Help services. Venue workers should not counsel customers for their gambling problems themselves.

Strategies for approaching distressed customers

When you approach a customer who is showing signs of distress, focus on the type of help you can offer, not why they are upset.

For example, say, 'How can I help you?' or 'can I contact someone for you?'

Don't say, 'Why are you upset?'

Remember:

- your role is to support the customer and provide appropriate referrals to professional support services, not to be a counsellor
- if you know the customer well, extra sensitivity and additional support from a venue manager or Responsible Gambling Officer may be appropriate.

How to use ABC123 to support de-escalation

Using the ABC123 approach can help the customer calm down and feel in control of the situation by giving them choices.

Acknowledge: Acknowledge the specific behaviour that must change, example: shouting.

Behaviour: Explain why the behaviour must change. Example: the customer's shouting is unacceptable and is disrupting other customers.

Choices: Offer the customer three choices from gentle to severe.

Example: say, 'I'm going to give you three choices.'

1. 'If you stop shouting, you can remain in the gaming room.'
2. 'If you would like to take a short break, we will reserve your machine.'
3. 'If you continue to shout, we will have to ask you to leave.'

Remember, deescalating a customer's behaviour isn't about being right or wrong, it's about reaching an outcome that supports the safety and comfort of the person, venue staff and other customers.

Calming a person using the EAR approach

Using the EAR approach can be an effective way of calming a customer, preventing a situation from escalating, or setting limits on a person's behaviour. It is important to describe the behaviour you have seen or heard, rather than assume an emotion.

Empathy: Use empathy to show that you understand how the customer is feeling and that you want to help.

Say, 'I can see that you are (describe the behaviour e.g. crying / hitting the machine) and I want to help.'

Attention: Many people will immediately calm down once they know that someone is willing to pay attention to them.

Say, 'Let's talk about what's making you (describe the behaviour) so that I can fully understand your situation.'

Respect: Letting them know that you respect them and take them seriously can be a very powerful way of calming a customer and helping them move on to finding a solution.

Say, 'I respect you and I take your concerns seriously.' Be prepared to roll with resistance, e.g. 'I understand that you don't want to talk about this now, but you can speak to one of our Responsible Gambling Officers about this at any time.'

Responsible service of gaming in your venue

Key points to remember when responding to customers



DO

Monitor and move around the gaming room regularly

Speak to all the customers in the gaming room

Get to know them – build a relationship and a connection

Take the opportunity in conversation to correct erroneous beliefs or misunderstandings of odds

Recognise and document the incident as a 'sign of distress' event in the RG Register



DON'T

Make assumptions

Ignore the situation

React with alarm

Agree to secrecy

Take offence at customer reactions

Agree with helplessness or minimise

The four Rs

Respond

Respond appropriately and with respect for the customer

Remember

If you see signs of distress, you must act

Refer

Refer customers to information and professional support services – you are not a counsellor

Report

Report to the Responsible Gambling Officer and log it in your venue's Responsible Gambling Register

After the approach

- debrief and support colleagues
- reflect on what went well and what could be improved in future
- document/log the incident in your venue's Responsible Gambling Register, remembering to include
 - date / time
 - details of gambling harm signs
 - action taken.