



Responsible Gaming Principles for Sports Gambling Legislation

NCPG's Responsible Gaming Principles for Sports Gambling Legislation provide a basis for new regulations and legislation that may be enacted to allow sports betting. The principles will help protect individuals, gaming companies, and legislators by assisting the creation of reasonable efforts to prevent harm and provide treatment.

NCPG urges that these principles be included in all sports betting legislation and calls on NCPG members and stakeholders to advocate for the implementation of these principles with their state and federal representatives.

These principles were approved by the NCPG Board of Directors in February 2018 and were based on our Board of Directors' February 2017 Resolution on Sports Betting. As stated in the Resolution:

“NCPG believes the expansion of legalized sports gambling in the United States will likely increase gambling participation and problems unless the following steps are taken to minimize harm.

Legislators and Regulators Should:

Ensure that any expansion of sports gambling includes dedicated funds to prevent and treat gambling addiction.

Require sports betting operators to implement responsible gaming programs which include comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent betting, specific requirements for the inclusion of help/prevention messages in external marketing.

Assign a regulatory agency to enforce the regulations and requirements that are enacted.

Conduct surveys of the prevalence of gambling addiction prior to expansion and at regular periods thereafter in order to monitor impacts of legalized sports betting and have data that will support evidence-based mitigation efforts. Establish a consistent minimum age for sports gambling and related fantasy games.”

Discussion:

Everyone who profits from sports betting bears responsibility for gambling problems. The only ethical and economical way to maximize benefits from sports betting is to minimize problem gambling harm. Therefore any governmental body and sports league that receives a direct percentage or portion of sports betting revenue must also dedicate funds to prevent and treat gambling problems.

Sports betting should not be allowed in a state without funding for problem gambling services.

NCPG suggests that the equivalent of 1% of revenue from legalized sports betting should be dedicated to problem gambling services. The source of funds may include state tax revenue and license fees as well as voluntary contributions by gaming operators. In order to maximize effective treatment and prevention, the funds must be dedicated to problem gambling and should be made available to state health agencies and private non-profits.

Sports betting operators must be required to have responsible gaming programs. These programs should be specified in the regulations. The operator must have a written plan with measurable objectives, and an annual report on the progress towards these goals must be provided to the regulator and available for public review. Compliance with the RG regulations and plan performance should be a condition of licensure and renewal.

Key elements of an RG plan include employee training for all staff who have contact with players, including customer service agents as well as administrative and corporate staff members. These staff members are taught skills and procedures specific to their position to respond to situations where a player exhibits warning signs or discloses they may have a gambling problem. Employees should be trained at hire and retrained and tested regularly.

Players who wish to exclude themselves from gambling or sports betting should have options through either the operator or an outside service recognized by NCPG or the regulatory agency. Family members should be able to request a gambler be banned through a process adjudicated by the regulator. Excluded players should receive information about available help services upon application; and subsequently should not receive any advertising, marketing or promotional materials or offers to continue gambling. Regulators should hold harmless operators who make reasonable efforts to comply with exclusion requests; but should pursue actions against operators who fail to make reasonable efforts.

Players should be able to set weekly or monthly deposit, loss, win and time limits prior to the onset of gaming.

The operator should have a clearly articulated commitment to advertising that does not mislead or target people with gambling problems or minors. Advertising should contain a responsible gaming message and/or the National Problem Gambling Helpline (1-800-522-4700)

number. Advertising should not be placed before any audience where most of the audience is ordinarily expected to be below the legal age to participate in gambling activity.

Any legislation to legalize sports betting must designate a regulatory agency with the specific mandate to minimize gambling-related harm. The regulator should consider the precautionary principle—there is a social responsibility to protect the public from exposure to harm, when scientific investigation has found a plausible risk—when considering new and expanded gambling legislation, regulations, policy or programs.

Survey research should be conducted prior to the expansion of sports betting and periodic monitoring conducted thereafter. In addition, data collected by regulated operators on gambling activity should be made publicly available through the regulatory agency to qualified researchers to help support mitigation efforts. Data must be de-identified to remove personally identifying information, consistent with Federal and state privacy, intellectual property and freedom of information laws.

A minimum age to bet on sports should be determined and enforced. Operators have an affirmative obligation to put in place technical and operational measures to prevent access by those who are underage, especially in online or mobile betting.

Sports betting legislation that allows internet, mobile and online gambling options may further increase risk factors for gambling addiction, but this technology also allows additional opportunities to enhance the responsible gaming features described above. Therefore NCPG urges legislators and regulators to utilize NCPG's best practice Internet Responsible Gambling Standards (IRGS) as the basis for any internet or mobile gaming regulation. Gaming vendors and operators are encouraged to build platforms and operations to meet these standards, and pursue NCPG's Internet Compliance Assessment Program (iCAP) to receive an independent audit confirming they meet the IRG standards. Not only will this make it easier for all stakeholders to have a consistent RG program across various jurisdictions, systems and license holders but most importantly it will provide gamblers with continuity of protection.

As with other forms of gambling, there will be a significant portion of the population who experience negative consequences as a result of sports betting. It is incumbent upon our governmental bodies to help both betting companies and their customers by requiring reasonable regulations that will protect individuals from addiction issues that are highly likely to be the unintended consequences of sports betting.