



Principles for Responsible Gaming/Gambling Legislation

Opportunities for gambling continue to increase throughout Ohio and nationally through both regulated and unregulated avenues.

Problem Gambling Network of Ohio (PGNO)'s Principles for Responsible Gaming/Gambling Legislation outline minimum standards for new regulations and legislation that may be enacted to expand legalized and regulated forms of gambling in Ohio. The principles will help protect individuals, operators, and regulators by assisting the creation of reasonable efforts to mitigate harm and maximize effective resources for those impacted.

PGNO is neutral regarding legalized gambling and gambling expansion, however, we do advocate for appropriate consumer protections. As we've learned from our state gambling surveys, increased access to gambling results in increased rates of problem gambling. Expanded gambling exposes a new audience to gambling, which will result in an increased demand for prevention, intervention and treatment services.

The 2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans, conducted by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and released by Ohio Responsible Gambling, which includes the Ohio Lottery Commission and the Ohio Casino Control Commission, found that the prevalence of at-risk and problem gamblers have doubled since the four casinos and seven racinos have opened in Ohio.

Ohio has a history of collaboration when it comes to this issue. The gambling treatment field began in our state. Ohio has developed award-winning campaigns, drawn on national and international expertise and tracked statewide and community-specific data regarding gambling prevalence, which includes: casino, lottery, stocks, sports, and other avenues, like bingo and raffles.

The behavioral health field and PGNO are working with state legislators to identify the kinds of regulations and consumer protections that could be put in place to address the continued evolution of gambling in Ohio.

Legislators and regulators should:

- Set and enforce the minimum legal age to wager 18 or 21, as state law dictates. Operators have an affirmative obligation to put in place technical and operational measures to prevent access by those who are underage.
- Ensure that any expansion of gambling includes a minimum of 2% of tax revenue, or in the event of charitable gaming, dedicated funds from licensing, to be directed to prevent, treat & research gambling addiction.
- Require operators to implement responsible gaming programs which include comprehensive employee training, self-exclusion, ability to set limits on time and money spent, specific requirements for the inclusion of help/prevention messages in external marketing.
- 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.
- Have clear marketing guidelines to prevent targeting vulnerable populations, including: youth, elderly, military and minorities.
- Include the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline and/or other statewide resources on all communications from the operators.
- Set licensing fees and tax rates at levels comparable to other states in order to ensure adequate resources for regulation and gambling support services.

As with other forms of gambling, there is a significant portion of the population who experience negative consequences as a result of gambling. It is incumbent upon our governmental bodies to help both operators and their customers by requiring reasonable regulations that will ensure the health and safety of our citizens. PGNO believes that the minimum standards indicated above, paired with efforts to combat illegal operations, and collaboration from regulators, operators, and prevention and treatment professionals will mitigate harm caused by expanded gambling in Ohio.

Linley, J., Frohnapef-Hasson, S., Sherba, R. T. (2019). 2017 Survey of At-Risk and Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Ohioans. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.