

## OTHER RESOURCES

Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline:

1 888 230-3505

Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario:

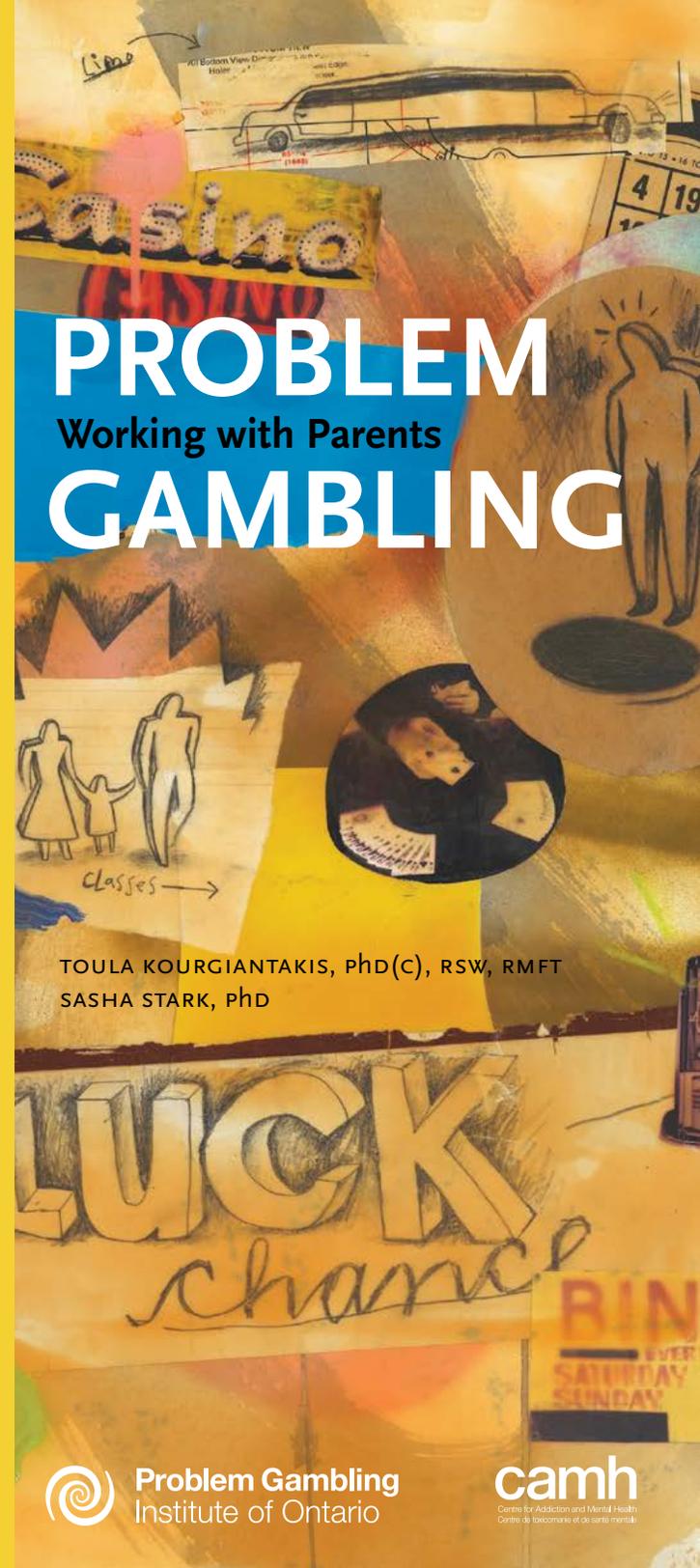
[www.problemgambling.ca](http://www.problemgambling.ca)

## REFERENCES

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2. Kourgiantakis, T., Saint-Jacques, M.C. & Tremblay, J. (2013). Problem gambling and families: A systematic review. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 13, 353–372.
3. Afifi, T.O., Brownridge, D.A., MacMillan, H. & Sareen, J. (2010). The relationship of gambling to intimate partner violence and child maltreatment in a nationally representative sample. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 44, 331–337.
4. Derevensky, J.L. (2012). *Teen Gambling: Understanding a Growing Epidemic*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
5. Stark, S., Kourgiantakis, T., Lobo, D. & Tepperman, L. (2014). *Children of Problem Gambling Parents: A Critical Review of Risks and Prevention Strategies*. Guelph, ON: Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre.
6. Kourgiantakis, T. & Stark, S. (2015). *Problem Gambling: A Guide for Parents*. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.



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# Working with Parents Who Have a Gambling Problem: Recommendations for Professionals

In Canada, the prevalence of problem gambling is 2.4%.<sup>1</sup> Problem gambling has many negative consequences for the person with a gambling problem, including mental and physical health issues, employment difficulties and financial hardship. It also has adverse effects on relationships and family members, in particular children.

Research shows that parental gambling problems have many consequences for children, including:

- increased rates of mental health disorders<sup>2</sup>
- emotional and behavioural difficulties<sup>2</sup>
- emotionally and physically unavailable parents<sup>2</sup>
- financial difficulties and lack of basic needs<sup>2</sup>
- increased risk of physical and emotional maltreatment<sup>3</sup>
- increased risk of exposure to domestic violence<sup>3</sup>
- gambling with the parent, often starting at an early age<sup>4</sup>
- increased risk of developing a gambling problem (three to 11 times higher than others).<sup>5</sup>

**The effect on children of parents' gambling problems, and how these children can be helped, are among the most overlooked areas in problem gambling.**<sup>5</sup>

Children whose parents have a gambling problem should receive the same services as children of parents with alcohol or other drug problems.

## HOW CAN MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS INCLUDE CHILDREN IN PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT?

- **Include children in sessions with their parents:** Some clinicians are trained in family interventions, and involve children directly by having them come to sessions with their parents. For centres that have limited resources, it is also possible to involve children indirectly by supporting parents with a gambling problem, as well as their partner or spouse (who may not gamble), in their parental roles.
- **Ask parents about their children:** Assess how the child is functioning at home and at school by asking both parents. It is also important to understand how the family as a whole is functioning, as this affects the child too. Parents may not recognize the impact problem gambling is having on their children, or may not make links between difficulties the child presents and the parent's problem gambling.
- **Educate parents on parental problem gambling and the risks to children:** *Problem Gambling: A Guide for Parents*<sup>6</sup> is free, and is available in print and online at [www.problemgambling.ca](http://www.problemgambling.ca). The booklet reviews ways children are affected by a parent's

gambling and gives parents tools to reduce the risks to their children. Ask parents if they have observed any of these effects in their children.

- **Make children a discussion topic in support groups:** In family support groups and those specifically for people with gambling problems, talking about children will make parents more aware of the extent to which their children may be affected, and might also provide opportunities to discuss helpful strategies.
- **Refer the family to a more specialized service:** If the needs of the child and family exceed the services you or your centre can offer, there are many children's mental health centres across Ontario that can address specific needs. To find an accredited Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO) centre in your community, visit [www.kidsmentalhealth.ca](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca).
- **Ask for help:** It can be difficult for helping professionals to balance the recovery of a person with a gambling problem and the needs of affected family members. Clinical supervision can provide you with support in your work.

## DUTY TO REPORT

When child safety is a concern, professionals have a duty to report this to a child protection agency. There are 46 Children's Aid Societies (CAS) across Ontario available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visit the OACAS website ([www.oacas.org/childwelfare/locate.htm](http://www.oacas.org/childwelfare/locate.htm)) to locate a CAS in your community.