



# **Supporting African Caribbean Black (ACB) Women With Gambling Concerns**

A Best Practices Guide for Professionals

The Jean Tweed Centre



For Women & Their Families

## Acknowledgments

We greatly appreciate the service providers, organizations and community members whose feedback and experiences were instrumental to the development of this guide.

We thank Angela Allen, BSc., MSW, RSW who provided insight, expertise and coordination that led to the production of this project.

A special acknowledgement to our advisory committee agencies:



Ontario Women's  
Gambling Network

We also thank Pages For Good for their contribution to the content and design of this booklet.



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## Introduction

This Best Practice Guide is a collaborative initiative to support African Caribbean Black (ACB) women with gambling concerns. The guide addresses the lack of women-responsive and culturally appropriate practice guidelines in Ontario. Learnings come from a convened advisory group, made up of various service agencies serving racialized women and/or providing gambling counselling.

A literature review on gambling was completed. A survey was created and circulated to the ACB women community. Results from the survey responses and literature review were compiled to create the guidelines. There is need for more research as it pertains to ACB women and gambling.

The information and sample materials in this guide were created for those supporting ACB women with gambling concerns.

## When Does Gambling Become a Problem?

Problem gambling is a repetitive behaviour pattern based on the action of wagering money or something of value on an event with an uncertain outcome, with the primary intent of winning money or goods. This behaviour can negatively affect all aspects of person's life. It can potentially create repeat negative harms over a period of time. To reduce the stigma around gambling the term 'gambling concerns' is used here.

# What Underlies Gambling Concerns for ACB Women?

## Stressors and the desire to escape from reality

- Money, poverty, low-wage jobs/unemployment/underemployment, job discrimination
- Isolation
- Racism
- Settlement stress (loss of culture, homesick, loss of status, etc.)
- Emotional distress related to gambling losses, having to borrow money, debts, etc.
- Mental health
- Histories of trauma
- Financial responsibilities to extended family
- Gender inequality

*“an escape from reality of unhappiness”*

## Poverty and the desire to make more money

- ACB women are disproportionately low-income, subject to inequitable pay/wages, higher unemployment rates, discrimination in the workplace and hiring processes, etc.
- ACB women may see gambling as *“a way to try their luck”*

## Loneliness and the desire for social interaction

- Places where gambling occurs can be source of socializing for participants, must be mindful of discussing strategies to help people maintain social connections
- Gambling can also have a negative impact on social relationships (secrecy, borrowing money, etc.)
- Gambling can be an opportunity to see friends and feel less lonely
- ACB women may perceive trips to casino as *“just the girls’ night out”*
- However, gambling can ultimately make one more isolated due to shame in *“returning alone to play the slots and lost my rent money”*

## Pleasure, excitement and the desire to assert power

- Many ACB women may feel disempowered by gender and racial discrimination, workplace or family dynamics, etc.
- ACB women seize control of their lives in order to carve out a time and space for the pursuit of pleasure
- The access and ability to gamble may fulfil their desire for risk-taking or see gambling as *“my turn to have a rush and have some fun”*



# Supporting African Caribbean Black (ACB) Women With Gambling Concerns

A Snapshot of Best Practices

## Context

### Acknowledge Diversity

Not all ACB women have the same preferences or experiences.  
Discuss preferences with each individual.

### Systemic Factors

Consider the impact of anti-black racism, economic disenfranchisement, and gender discrimination on ACB women's lives.

### Understanding of 'Gambling'

Explore what behaviours count as 'gambling'.  
Discuss the role gambling plays in one's life.

## Engagement

### Treat Underlying Issues

Determine if there are other issues such as depression, loneliness, financial insecurity and impact of racism.

### Support Options

Offer a variety of approaches, including, one-on-one, groups, all ACB women groups, groups that integrate other health-related topics.

### Positive Aspects of Gambling and Redirect

Acknowledge what is gained from gambling, such as social interaction, sense of community, feeling empowered.  
Use as fulcrum to redirect to alternative outlets.

### Attitude

Practice non-judgmental, kind, gentle, tolerant, respectful, sympathetic, and responsive interactions.

## Outreach

### Representation

Create outreach tools, program materials and supportive spaces where ACB are reflected and feel represented.

### Location

Promote services in places and publications where ACB women and/or their loves one attend or frequent. From transit ads, social media, ethnic media, religious gatherings, bingo halls to convenience stores.

*"Often those offering supports are not Black folks and so there is a sense of judgment (this is also present when the staff is Black) but you are more comfortable and able to relate to someone that looks like you"*

ACB community member

## Thank You to Our Advisory Committee Agencies



Ontario Women's Gambling Network



## Screening ACB Women for Gambling Concerns

ACB women are impacted by many systemic factors that can lead to destructive behaviours. Screening can be done in a one-on-one conversation style. Here are some questions to ask to determine whether a woman requires support around gambling:

- Ask them what they need
- Create a solid therapeutic relationship first, ask about their life, get to know them before asking about gambling
- Be kind, patient, gentle, tolerant, respectful, non-judgmental, sympathetic, and responsive
- Explore the role gambling plays in their life (why they gamble, impacts of gambling, positives and negatives, feelings they get from gambling, etc.)
- Explore notions of what they consider to be 'gambling'
- Provide options for responses, either written or in-person
- Provide opportunities for peers to discuss with each other (not just with staff)

# Supporting ACB Women

## Representation

The creation of more Black agencies, more Black staff and support groups, specifically designed for Black women provides a safe environment for ACB women who require help.

*“Ensuring they see folks that look like them. Often those offering supports are not Black folks and so there is a sense of judgment (this is also present when the staff is Black) but you are more comfortable and able to relate to someone that looks like you”*

Survey participant

## Theoretical approaches and attitude

- Be aware of stigma: stigma around having a problem and therefore seeking support
- Use discretion (due to stigma)
- Acknowledge role of systemic roots of stressors (racism, discrimination, xenophobia, capitalism) as way to avoid blame, shame, etc.
- Advocate for broader systemic changes
- Include the community in all aspects of the work
- Incorporate a strengths-based approach - what strengths does a client have, how can the client be empowered to use their strengths to combat their gambling behaviours
- Harm reduction approach - reducing harm rather than total abstinence
- Attitude (interpersonally and throughout agency literature): be kind, tolerant, respectful, non-judgmental, sympathetic, and responsive
- Make services easily accessible

## Specific strategies/techniques

- Ask them what they need, as not all ACB women will have the same needs or experiences
- Be mindful of language: may not be effective to use word ‘gambling’, be more specific with terminology (e.g., scratch tickets)
- May provide strategies for ‘financial difficulties’ rather than for ‘gambling’
- Increase financial stability (credit counselling, budgeting, provide job opportunities)
- Explore the meaning, history, values and relational power dynamics attached to money
- Discuss alternative ways to socialize and maintain connection to community/cultural traditions
- Discuss alternative ways to focus on self, self-care, self-esteem, reward oneself
- Provide counselling to address stressors
- Provide education about gambling and its impacts
- Emphasize that gambling not a reliable way to make money (ex. Bingo winnings are usually shared, winning probabilities low, etc.)
- Support reflection on the family and community, rather than just on the individual
- Black people and women may be socialized to be more concerned with social networks and connections
- Integrate into other health-related topics, rather than sole focus on gambling and/or focus on underlying stressors that can contribute to gambling (loneliness, depression, etc.)



# Reaching ACB Women About Gambling Services

Knowing where and how to reach ACB women is essential to providing gambling support services. ACB women gamble in variety of ways and in a range of places, therefore it is important to promote in places where they may frequent or gamble. From transit ads, social media, religious gatherings to convenience stores, here are the most recommended locations:

- Subway, buses, bus stops
- Community centres
- Television
- Online, social media
- Neighbourhood
- Gaming centres, bingo halls
- Religious gatherings
- Radio
- Local community paper
- Local shops, convenience stores

## Resources for Service Providers and ACB Women Who Gamble

It is important for service providers and ACB women who require support contact community agencies that offer programs, counselling or provide access to the resources for ACB women around gambling concerns. The following community-based agencies have someone you can talk or can refer you to the right type of help:

[Across Boundaries](#) (Toronto)  
[Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre](#) (Ottawa)  
[Black Creek Community Health Centre](#) (Toronto)  
[Elizabeth Fry](#) (Toronto)  
[TAIBU Community Health Centre](#) (Toronto)  
[The Jean Tweed Centre](#) (Toronto)

# Key Messages

ACB women are disproportionately low-income, subject to inequitable pay/wages, higher unemployment rates, discrimination in the workplace and hiring processes. These issues may lead to problem gambling. These key messages were created to help you identify relevant issues and begin talking about problem gambling among ACB women.

## **Key Message 1: Recognizing Gambling**

Unaware regular activities are gambling habits.  
You may be gambling and not know it.

## **Key Message 2: Risks of Gambling**

Gambling can become a problem for you.  
Know the risks.

## **Key Message 3: Responsible Gambling**

Set your time and budget limit before you gamble.  
Gamble for entertainment, not to make money.

## **Key Message 4: Problem Gambling Warning Signs**

I don't recognize when to stop gambling.  
Know the warning signs of problem gambling.

## **Key Message 5: Seeking Help**

Talk to someone about your gambling concerns.  
Seek help before it gets worse.

For more information about these key messages along with a summary of facts and supporting statements, please visit [www.jeantweed.com](http://www.jeantweed.com).

Use these messages as a guide whenever you want to start conversations or engage with ACB women about gambling. In doing so, your communication will remain consistent and always on point.

# Further Research and Readings

- **Casinos and Gambling in Massachusetts: African-American Perspectives**  
<https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Casinos-and-Gambling-in-Massachusetts-African-American-Perspectives-2-14-19.pdf>
- **“Problem gambling among ethnic minorities: results from an epidemiological study”**  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5589834/>
- **A Guide for Counsellors Working with Problem Gambling Clients from Ethno-cultural Communities**  
<http://icboc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/A-Guide-for-Counsellors-Working-with-Problem-Gambling-Clients-from-Ethno-Cultural-Communities.pdf>
- **Disordered gambling among racial and ethnic groups in the US: Results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions**  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2737691/>
- **New Research on Minorities and Gambling | ICRG**  
<https://www.icrg.org/resources/publications/issues-insights/new-research-minorities-and-gambling>
- **A feminist slant on counselling the female gambler: Key issues and tasks**  
<http://jgi.camh.net/index.php/jgi/article/view/3626/3586>
- **Women and gambling-related harm: a narrative literature review and implications for research, policy, and practice**  
<https://harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12954-019-0284-8>
- **Best practices for Older adults - CAMH**  
<http://jgi.camh.net/index.php/jgi/article/view/4021/4333>
- **CAMH: Guide for Helping professionals**  
<https://learn.problemgambling.ca/PDF%20library/handbook-guide-for-helping-professionals-accessible-2017.pdf>
- **The RGC Centre for the Advancement of Best Practices (CABP) promotes the identification and adoption of best practices to reduce the incidence of problem gambling**  
<https://www.responsiblegambling.org/for-industry/rgc-centre-for-advancement-of-best-practices/>

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