



Missed Opportunities: “Secret Shoppers” Obtain Limited Responsible Gambling Information

Key Takeaways from Two Secret Shopper Studies About Seeking RG Information from Casinos

Casinos are required to provide responsible gambling information to consumers to mitigate risks of gambling-related harm.

Casino operators are required to provide responsible gambling (RG) information, although specific requirements vary considerably by jurisdiction. In addition, many casinos are members of the American Gaming Association (AGA) and agree to abide by its “[Code of Conduct](#).” AGA members are expected “to promote responsible gaming,” including by providing information about RG at casinos and on their websites.

Given government regulations and AGA standards, it would be expected that consumers would be able to reliably access RG information to educate themselves about approaches to gambling that could reduce their risk of experiencing harm.

“Secret shoppers” who called casinos did not reliably obtain RG information.

“Secret shoppers” sought RG information from casinos within driving distance of a metropolitan area in the Southeast. Telephone callers to casinos’ customer service phone numbers were likely to end a call without obtaining the RG information they sought. Callers were often transferred to other representatives and, on average, spent half the length of the calls on hold. For only one call did the caller rate the customer service representative as attentive; on other calls the representative was rated as neutral or at least somewhat dismissive. In only 2 of the 12 calls did the caller rate the representative as having any general understanding of RG. Nine of 12 calls confirmed the availability of RG material at the casino, while 5 confirmed the availability of RG information on the casino’s website.

“Secret shoppers” had limited success getting RG information at casinos.

“Secret shoppers” who visited the same casinos in person obtained varying qualities of information. When asked for general information about RG, 13 out of 20 employees were able to provide it. When asked about the availability of RG information on the casino’s website, only 7 out of 20 employees confirmed its availability. “Secret shoppers” themselves were able to confirm the availability of RG pamphlets at all casinos and reported they were readily accessible. However, not all employees seemed aware of the presence or location of these materials. When asked about RG material in the casino itself, 15 of 20 employees confirmed its availability, and 14 could provide directions to the information. Although not all information requests were successful, they did typically result in friendly employee responses.

Action Steps to Consider: Equipping Personnel with RG Knowledge

Not only is providing access to RG information a requirement for casinos in most jurisdictions, but it is also vital for helping consumers make informed decisions about whether and how to gamble and for mitigating the risks of gambling-related harm. When a consumer is unable to reliably access RG information, there is a missed opportunity to equip them to gamble responsibly and avoid gambling-related harms. A consumer who is unsuccessful in obtaining RG information may not persist in their pursuit of this information and, as a result, may gamble in riskier ways.

It is imperative that every consumer who seeks RG information be able to get it. Possibilities for improving access to RG information could include:

- Expanding RG training of casino employees, including those answering the telephone and those working on the casino's property.
- Designating RG information desks to handle telephone calls and walk-up requests for RG information. The people who staff these desks could have deeper training on RG than general casino employees, so that other employees could refer complex questions to them. Alternatively, these information desks could be staffed by individuals from an RG entity.

If you want to learn about RG practices, visit thegamblingclinic.com/responsible-gambling-practices/.

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This brief is based on two studies using secret shopper methodology at 7 casinos: 1) a telephone study including a total of 12 calls and 2) an in-person study including interactions with 20 staff members. This article encompasses both studies:

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