

## news & notes

### GAMBLING NUMBERS

Here are statistics from the National Council on Problem Gambling for one recent year:

- A majority of U.S. adults (about 85 percent) have gambled at least once.
- More than half (60 percent) have gambled within the past year.
- Hawaii and Utah are the only states that do not have some form of legalized gambling (at the time this issue is published).
- In a given year, an estimated 2 million U.S. adults are considered to be pathological gamblers.
- An additional 4 million to 6 million experience problems as a result of gambling.

With these numbers in play, odds are that at least some employees in our organization have gambled, and it is possible that some of them are gambling at work. In most workplaces, gambling is only a mild presence and requires simple rules to keep in check. Occasionally, however, an employee is a compulsive gambler and, ultimately, will disrupt the workplace if unnoticed.



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## 'Don't bet on it!'

### *Know the negative effects of gambling at work*

Gambling in the workplace can lead to a variety of problems, such as:

- Cheating
- Criminal activity
- Fighting
- Financial difficulty
- Loss of productivity
- Lying

Furthermore, every employee problem costs the workplace in time, productivity, morale, and money. Gambling in the workplace can be open or in secret and can take many forms, including:

- Betting on sports, such as March Madness or Super Bowl office pools
- Online gambling for employees who have Internet access and can easily access online casinos and betting opportunities
- Crap games
- Illegal lotteries
- Wagers on election outcomes

Learn to recognize the warning signs that could indicate someone has a gambling problem. They include:

- **Bragging.** The addictive gambler spends much time talking about gambling, winning, and the glamour and importance of gambling events in his or her life.
- **Distractions from work.** Decreased productivity, lack of concentration, excessive telephone use, or frequent absences of a few hours or part of a day are potential indicators of a gambling problem.
- **Noticeable mood swings.** These are common, mirroring good luck or bad luck. As losses increase, deep depression or frantic desperation might become apparent.
- **Variations in cash.** With the addictive gambler, it's either feast or famine—completely broke one day, lavish spending the next.
- **Borrowing money.** Addictive gamblers often borrow from coworkers.
- **Theft.** To pay for spiraling losses, there might be an inside theft or minor financial irregularity in the workplace.

Compulsive gambling can lead to devastating financial and family problems that can have a negative impact on your job performance. Though it is not a covered addiction under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can get help for a gambling problem through employee assistance programs (EAPs). You can make a request for EAP assistance—or your manager or an HR representative could refer you as a result of job performance problems. If you work with an EAP program, rest assured that this EAP service is strictly confidential.

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### **BENEFITS & AFFORDABILITY**

Only 41% of respondents see health care as affordable 5 years from now versus the 62% who see it affordable today, according to the latest data from Mercer's *Inside Employees' Minds Survey* ([www.mercer.us/insights/focus/inside-employees-minds-the-transforming-employment-experience.html](http://www.mercer.us/insights/focus/inside-employees-minds-the-transforming-employment-experience.html)). Also notable is that 32% of respondents indicated they were concerned about their ability to afford health care in their retirement, up from 24% in the previous survey.

A press release from Mercer, the global consulting firm, states that workers aged 34 and younger are demanding more flexibility in the benefits delivered by their employers, with 70% of that group saying they would like to reduce the value of some benefits while increasing the value of others. For example, they ranked retirement benefits ahead of low healthcare costs on the survey.

"Employees of all types continue to value benefits, with nine in 10 saying they are just as important as getting paid," said Gillian Printon, senior partner in Mercer's Health & Benefits business.



## **New year, new course**

### *High school students learn about safety*

Some students in grades 7 through 12 will participate in an interactive teaching module titled *Safety Matters* initiated by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA). Members of both groups will help introduce the 1-hour course to students across the United States.

According to an article published by the AIHA, approximately 1.6 million teens aged 15 to 17 are employed in the United States. On average, each year 60,000 of these young workers are injured seriously enough to warrant a trip to the emergency room.

Young workers have high occupational injury rates, which are in part explained by the high frequency of injury hazards, such as slippery floors and the use of knives and cooking equipment, in restaurants. Inexperience and lack of safety training may also increase the risk. NIOSH says that for the youngest workers, biological and psychosocial factors (like inadequate strength and cognitive abilities) may contribute to increased injury rates.

The *Safety Matters* curriculum (NIOSH publication 2016-100 — [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-100/pdfs/2016-100.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2016-100/pdfs/2016-100.pdf)) is intended to raise awareness among young workers about safety and health. It stresses that many workplace injuries and illnesses are predictable and can be prevented. Students learn that employers are responsible for—and that employees have the right to—safe and healthful work.

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## **Weight and the workplace**

### *Americans are resolving (again) to get in shape*

Come January 1, we all know what happens. Gym parking lots fill up as many Americans set out to fulfill their New Year's resolution to lose weight. But the truth is weight issues are a national concern throughout the year and can impact anyone. Here are a few stories about weight and the workplace.

- **Fast-Food Employee Gains Weight, Files Suit** ([hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Fast-Food-Employee-Gains-Weight-Files-Suit](http://hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Fast-Food-Employee-Gains-Weight-Files-Suit))—The company famous for “happy meals” has at least one ex-manager who is anything but happy with the food selection at work.
- **Hey Everybody, It's Recess Time—at Work!** ([hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Hey-Everybody-Its-Recess-Time-at-Work](http://hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Hey-Everybody-Its-Recess-Time-at-Work))—How do you increase attendance, wellness, and productivity—and reenergize yourself? Try throwing a Frisbee®, whirling a Hula Hoop, playing Simon Says, and doing other school yard activities you enjoyed as a kid during “recess” time at work!
- **Employee Drops 100 Pounds, Then Drops from the Sky** ([hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Employee-Drops-100-Pounds-then-Drops-from-the-Sky](http://hr.blr.com/HR-SBT/Employee-Drops-100-Pounds-then-Drops-from-the-Sky))—How did one company reward a worker who lost the most weight in a wellness competition? How about letting him jump out of a plane?