

Core Competencies

for Gambling Recovery Peers



This document presents core competencies for Gambling Recovery Peers (also known by other titles, including gambling recovery support specialist, gambling harms support specialist, peer support specialist, gambling recovery coaches, etc.). The competencies were developed by professionals from across the United States and United Kingdom with funding from Oregon Health Authority Problem Gambling Services (PGS).

In the spring of 2023, Oregon PGS assembled a work group of experts to develop core competencies for GRPs. The motivation for this work was multifold. First, to guide professional development and certification efforts; second to guide self-directed learning; third to help supervisors and supervisees identify and evaluate areas of strength and growth; fourth, to inform agency training initiatives; and finally, to help steer state, national, and international workforce development.

Work group experts collaboratively developed a list of core competencies, and grouped them within six domains, as shown on the list below. Additionally, they identified colleagues who possessed the knowledge and skills to contribute to the further development of these competencies. Using a modified Delphi method to build consensus, researchers hired by Oregon PGS conducted two surveys with work group experts and problem gambling professionals they identified, asking them to rate each proposed core competency in terms of its importance to the work of competent gambling recovery peers, and to provide feedback and suggestions for edits and additions. Forty-five panelists participated rating items. Overall, 74 core competencies were accepted by the panelists and are included in this document.

DOMAIN 1: KNOWLEDGE

Competent gambling recovery peers demonstrate working knowledge of:

Working knowledge of each of the following topic:	
1.1.	Gambling (e.g., definition of gambling, types of gambling, gambling industry).
1.2.	Basic concepts related to gambling problems and gambling recovery (e.g., behavioral reinforcement, emotional avoidance, gambling action cycle, gambling spectrum, pathways to gambling problems, triggers, money barriers, cognitive distortions).
1.3.	Co-occurring disorders and their impact on gambling (e.g., mental health, substance use, physical problems).
1.4.	Multiple pathways of recovery (e.g., natural recovery, counseling assisted recovery, community mutual aid) and various recovery systems (e.g., GamAnon, GamTalk, inpatient/outpatient treatment, online resources).
1.5.	Principles of relapse prevention (e.g., identifying high risk situations for relapse, developing solutions, learning from relapse).
1.6.	Diverse recovery goals (e.g., abstinence v. harm reduction).
1.7.	Availability of gambling treatment systems in their area.
1.8.	Stages of change and gambling recovery (i.e., precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance).
1.9.	Awareness of the importance of family relationships.

DOMAIN 2: RELATIONSHIPS

Competent gambling recovery peers:

Subdomain 2.1. Communication

2.1.1.	Are aware of the importance of communication between self and others.
2.1.2.	Listen with careful attention to the content and emotion being communicated.
2.1.3.	Model the use of non-stigmatizing language (e.g., person with gambling-related harms v. gambler or problem gambling), while recognizing and accepting how others may self-identify as part of their recovery.
2.1.4.	Balance sharing with listening, knowing when to share and when to listen.
2.1.5.	Help others resolve conflict through the development of effective and healthy communication strategies.
2.1.6.	Use various modalities of communication (e.g., text / tele) properly.

Subdomain 2.2. Relationship Development

2.2.1.	Set expectations for the peer recovery relationship (e.g., availability, differences between counseling and peer support, preferred methods of communicating).
2.2.2.	Encourage the development of a safe and supportive network of relationships.
2.2.3.	Engender trust by acting in an accepting, empathetic, and nonjudgmental manner.
2.2.4.	Meet people “where they are”; motivate without forcing change.
2.2.5.	Validate the feelings and experiences of others.

DOMAIN 3: MENTORSHIP

Competent gambling recovery peers:

Subdomain 3.1. Strength-Oriented Approach

3.1.1.	Share lived experience to embody / inspire hope and support those with whom they work.
3.1.2.	Model personal recovery and change practices to help others engage in recovery practices that work for them.
3.1.3.	Provide information about skills related to health and wellness.
3.1.4.	Address stigma and shame experienced by those with whom they work.
3.1.5.	Celebrate others’ efforts and accomplishments; encourage, support, and praise.
3.1.6.	Identify strengths and resilience in others and help them identify these within themselves.
3.1.7.	Foster independence; support others in using effective problem-solving skills within their cultural values and frameworks to make decisions that work best for their lives.

Subdomain 3.2. Trauma-Informed Care

3.2.1.	Understand and use principles of trauma-informed care (i.e., safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment).
3.2.2.	Recognize when trauma is having an impact on recovery and, when appropriate, refer to counseling or other resources.
3.2.3.	Recognize various types of traumas (e.g., financial trauma, adverse childhood experiences, and other sources of trauma).

3.2.4.	Recognize that the experience and impact of trauma is subjective and attune to others' perceptions of trauma.
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Subdomain 3.3. Guidance in the Change Process

3.3.1.	Tailor services and the role of a gambling recovery peer to meet the unique needs of others across the continuum of change and recovery.
3.3.2.	Provide gambling recovery-related information/ education.
3.3.3.	Assist and support others in envisioning change, setting goals, and accomplishing tasks.
3.3.4.	Identify and encourage formal, informal, and natural sources of support (e.g., counseling, community support groups, family).
3.3.5.	Help resolve ambivalence and increase motivation to change.
3.3.6.	Maintain awareness of gambling and financial safeguards.
3.3.7.	Provide support to access financial services as needed.
3.3.8.	Support choice of participation in various recovery resources (e.g., various self-help groups, inpatient treatment, outpatient treatment, family treatment, psychoeducation, on-line resources).
3.3.9.	Support multiple pathways for change (e.g., harm reduction and abstinence strategies; self-help and clinical treatment).

Subdomain 3.4. Support for Affected Others

3.4.1.	Maintain positive regard for affected others.
3.4.2.	Provide resources, information, and education to affected others on gambling and gambling recovery.
3.4.3.	Encourage family members and important others to seek help when needed.
3.4.4.	Use personal disclosure, empathy, and respect to encourage understanding between family members and / or between important others.
3.4.5.	Support recognition of personal responsibility regarding how gambling affects others (e.g., family members, friends, employers, colleagues).

Subdomain 3.5. Safety and Crisis Support

3.5.1.	Recognize signs of distress and help connect to available resources, which may include 24-hr services (e.g., crisis support and helplines).
3.5.2.	Help others develop and use coping strategies when stressed.
3.5.3.	When providing support for unusually stressful situations, seek supervision as needed for guidance.
3.5.4.	Help diffuse emotionally charged situations.
3.5.5.	Identify signs of risk, including abuse, neglect, IPV, exploitation, and suicidal ideation, and seek supervision as needed.
3.5.6.	Take appropriate action when emotional pain and risk are present; encourage engagement in crisis services as needed; seek supervision.
3.5.7.	Understand principles of suicide prevention / gatekeeping (e.g., ask, be there, help others remain safe, help others connect to appropriate resources, stay in relationship within the scope of gambling recovery peer, seek supervision).
3.5.8.	Understand and comply with applicable mandatory reporting laws and policies.

DOMAIN 4: ADVOCACY

Competent gambling recovery peers:

4.1.	Maintain up-to-date information about community and online resources.
4.2.	Assist those with whom they work to investigate, select, and use resources and services.
4.3.	Share with others the importance and value of peer support.
4.4.	Network and collaborate with community organizations and other partners.
4.5.	Participate as a member of the treatment / recovery support team (when possible and appropriate).
4.6.	Advocate and serve as a bridge to services and institutions; the natural support of friends, families, allies; and the greater recovery community.
4.7.	Support consumer rights to access relevant services (e.g., filing for bankruptcy, social security benefits, housing, the right to self-exclude / self-limit).

DOMAIN 5: CORE VALUES

Competent gambling recovery peers:

5.1.	Demonstrate the core values of trust, respect, mutuality, safety, and authenticity.
5.2.	Identify their own cultural values and how these may contribute to biases, judgements, and beliefs that may influence relationships with others.
5.3.	Understand the values, culture, and spiritual beliefs and practices of those with whom they work.
5.4.	Recognize the impact of discrimination on those in historically marginalized and / or vulnerable groups (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nation of origin, age, abilities, gender identity, mental health, immigration status, housing status, etc.).
5.5.	Maintain awareness of indigenous and other recovery support resources that are not part of the traditional health and human services system.
5.6.	Strive to minimize power imbalance / hierarchical structure in the relationship with those whom they support.
5.7.	Remain open-minded, demonstrate humility, and engage in ongoing efforts to increase social and cultural awareness.

DOMAIN 6: PROFESSIONAL ROLE

Competent gambling recovery peers:

Subdomain 6.1. Personal Wellness

6.1.1.	Practice awareness of internal state, recognize distress, and seek help or support for personal and professional health and wellbeing (e.g., personal stressors, burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, etc.).
6.1.2.	Prioritize personal physical and emotional safety, be cognizant of any potential personal or recovery safety risks, and seek help or support when needed.

Subdomain 6.2. Ethics and Professional Responsibilities

6.2.1.	Complete service documentation and administrative tasks in a timely and effective manner.
6.2.2.	Follow ethical guidelines, professional policies, and legal mandates (e.g., confidentiality, confidentiality when working with affected others; responding to subpoenas, mandatory reporting).
6.2.3.	Effectively seek out and engage in mentoring, peer consultation, and/or supervision.
6.2.4.	Practice awareness of safety and other implications involved with delivering digital peer support (e.g., digital conferencing, social media, texting, etc.).
6.2.5.	Maintain personal and professional boundaries.