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Media Contact
Elaine Driscoll (MGC) 617-571-2964
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Have a Game Plan! **The Massachusetts Gaming Commission Emphasizes Year-Round Commitment During Responsible Gaming Education Week**

Informed by research, MGC continues targeted initiatives to encourage healthy levels of play

Did you know that the rate of remission or recovery from problem gambling is quite high? A [study](#) released last week from the University of Massachusetts Amherst found that **44%** of persons, who were problem gamblers one year, did not meet the criteria the following year. And while this group is finding relief from gambling harm, they tend to continue to gamble, but more moderately.

Why is this important?

In Massachusetts, [2% or roughly 110,000 adult residents](#) meet the criteria for problem gambling, and **8%** or **440,000** are experiencing harm to a lesser degree. Research shows that remission from the symptoms of problem gambling is common; however, these individuals remain at-risk. Findings underscore the importance of offering a variety of options supporting safe play, harm reduction, and abstinence.

In 2015, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) launched [GameSense](#), an innovative, player-focused responsible gaming program that encourages players to adopt behaviors and attitudes that reduce the risk of gambling-related harm. Operated by the [Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling](#), GameSense Info Centers are located at each casino property and staffed by trained advisors. GameSense advisors equip players and employees with information, tips and tools to keep gambling a safe and enjoyable experience. In the first eight months of 2019, GameSense advisors at the three Massachusetts casinos have engaged close to **23,000** patrons and **2,500** employees in conversations about responsible gaming. An [early evaluation](#) of the GameSense program found that over **40%** of casino patrons who interacted with an advisor caused them to change or think differently about their gambling behavior.

The MGC has enrolled **650** people into the [Voluntary Self-Exclusion program \(VSE\)](#), supporting individuals who elect to abstain from casino gambling in Massachusetts. A 2018 VSE [evaluation](#) found that 80% of surveyed enrollees reduced or stopped gambling at six and twelve month follow-up after enrollment.

As part of the MGC's steadfast commitment to promoting positive play and reducing gambling-related harm, the MGC enthusiastically supports Responsible Gaming Education Week (RGEW) from **September 16 – September 20, 2019**. RGEW was developed by the American Gaming Association in 1998 to prioritize responsible gaming as an integral part of the gaming industry's daily operations. The annual advocacy week also provides an opportunity to strengthen employee training, promote gaming literacy among casino guests, and further advance responsible gaming programs.

The week-long campaign features the themes "Watch Your Time" and "Have a Game Plan." It is common practice for responsible gamblers to routinely set time limits and establish a play strategy before they gamble. GameSense advisors reinforce these strategies through educational activities offered daily at all three GameSense Info Centers. Massachusetts casinos strongly support RGEW activities and elevate messaging through social media and in-casino signage.

Mark Vander Linden, MGC director of research and responsible gaming, said, "Massachusetts is incredibly fortunate to have a robust research program to guide these strategies. GameSense advisors are the heart of



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the program. Their work empowers patrons to gamble safely and responsibly, not only during RGEW but year-round.”

About GameSense

Introduced by BCLC in 2009, GameSense is an innovative, player-focused responsible gambling program that encourages players to adopt behaviors and attitudes that can reduce the risk of developing gambling disorders. This includes setting and sticking to personally-allocated time and monetary limits for gambling, as well as being open and honest with family, friends and oneself when it comes to personal gambling habits. GameSense has earned international recognition such as the World Lottery Association’s Best Overall Responsible Gambling Program (2010), and the U.S. – based National Council on Problem Gambling’s Social Responsibility Award (2015). In addition to being licensed and piloted at MGM Resort International casino properties, the program has been implemented by Connecticut Lottery, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission and Canadian provinces Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

In Massachusetts, each gaming establishment is required by statute to provide on-site space (the GameSense Info Center) for player education. Massachusetts is the only jurisdiction in the country required by law to offer responsible gaming resources onsite. There, patrons can learn about myths associated with gambling, the odds of the games they are playing, take a break, and seek support from a GameSense Advisor. The GameSense program combines recommendations on responsible gaming techniques with interactive tools and exhibits meant to engage patrons at Massachusetts casino gaming facilities and online at GameSenseMA.com.

About MassGaming

The mission of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission is to create a fair, transparent, and participatory process for implementing the expanded gaming law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in November 2011. In creating that process, the Commission will strive to ensure that its decision-making and regulatory systems engender the confidence of the public and participants, and that they provide the greatest possible economic development benefits and revenues to the people of the Commonwealth, reduce to the maximum extent possible the potentially negative or unintended consequences of the new legislation, and allow an appropriate return on investment for gaming providers that assures the operation of casino-resorts of the highest quality. For more information on MGC, please visit MassGaming.com or connect and share on Twitter ([@MassGamingComm](https://twitter.com/MassGamingComm)) or Facebook www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm



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