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## **Have a Game Plan!**

### **The Massachusetts Gaming Commission Prioritizes Responsible Gaming Year-Round and Showcases Responsible Gaming Education Week at Three Massachusetts Casinos**

*Informed by research, MGC continues targeted initiatives to encourage healthy and safe play*

Did you know [recent research](#) indicates that individuals who gamble more than four days per month may be at a higher risk for experiencing gambling-related harms? Additionally, data shows limiting the consumption of alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs while gambling can help individuals stick to the recommended gambling guidelines and lower their risk of gambling-related harm. Tips like these, including setting limits and establishing a game plan before gambling, are at the center of the responsible gaming programs at the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC).

#### **Why is this important?**

A 2014 population survey conducted in Massachusetts found that [2% or roughly 110,000 adult residents](#) met the criteria for problem gambling, and **8% or 440,000** were experiencing harm to a lesser degree. Research shows that remission from the symptoms of problem gambling is common; however, these individuals remain at-risk. Recent findings underscore the importance of offering various options supporting safe play, harm reduction, and abstinence.

In 2015, the 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 Gaming and Health, 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 fiscal year 2021, GameSense Advisors at the three Massachusetts casinos had engaged more than 34,000 patrons and employees in conversations about responsible gaming. An [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.

Since the first casino opened in Massachusetts in 2015, more than 1,200 people enrolled in the MGC's [Voluntary Self-Exclusion \(VSE\) program](#), supporting individuals who elect to abstain from casino gambling in Massachusetts.

As part of the MGC's commitment to promoting positive play and reducing gambling-related harms, the MGC enthusiastically supports Responsible Gaming Education Week (RGEW) from **September 19 – September 25, 2021**. 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 theme "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.



Massachusetts Gaming Commission

**Mark Vander Linden**, MGC's 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 the program. Their work empowers patrons to gamble safely and responsibly, not only in person but virtually, 24/7 via live chat. We look forward to RGEW every year, but for the MGC, responsible gaming is an everyday commitment."

#### **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 and being open and honest with family, friends, and oneself regarding 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.

GameSense Advisors staff a LiveChat platform that allows individuals to chat live with GameSense Advisors 24/7 via text on their cell phones or other electronic devices. Whether it's to learn the odds of a game, find resources for help, or schedule a remote VSE, LiveChat allows GameSense to meet the public where they're most comfortable.

In Massachusetts, each gaming establishment is required by statute to provide onsite 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](http://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](http://MassGaming.com) or connect and share on Twitter ([@MassGamingComm](https://twitter.com/MassGamingComm)) or Facebook [www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm](http://www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm)



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