



For Immediate Release  
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## **Voluntary Self-Exclusion from MA Casinos Hits Milestone** *More than 1,000 persons are now enrolled in the program.*

In 2015, to coincide with the opening of the first casino in the state, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) launched the [Voluntary Self-Exclusion \(VSE\) program](#). Since then, the program has been a critical component of the MGC's comprehensive efforts to mitigate problem gambling.

The VSE program allows participants to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor of all Massachusetts casinos for a pre-determined length of time. Currently, there are 1,020 active individuals enrolled in the program; and since the VSE program's inception, nearly 1,300 individuals have participated.

**Mark Vander Linden**, MGC's Director of Research and Responsible Gaming, said, "This milestone is significant but represents a small percentage of those struggling to control their gambling. The VSE program is designed to honor and support a person's decision to stop gambling."

Local research indicates that, in 2013 and 2014, [2% or roughly 110,000 adult residents](#) met the criteria for problem gambling in the Commonwealth, and **8% or 440,000** were at risk for experiencing harm. These figures underscore the importance of offering various options to support safe play, harm reduction, and abstinence.

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Persons who enroll in the program can select a duration of one year, three years, five years, or a lifetime. Individuals may select the lifetime exclusion only if they have first completed a shorter term. A majority of the enrollees select a five-year term (53%) followed by a one-year term (28%). Only 3 percent of individuals are enrolled in the lifetime option. Nearly 70% of enrollees are male and the median age is 46 years old.

A vast majority of individuals (83%) enroll in the program at the GameSense Info Centers located at each casino and staffed by trained staff known as GameSense Advisors. The MGC has a contract with the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health to operate the [GameSense](#) program. This innovative, player-focused responsible gaming program encourages players to adopt behaviors and attitudes that reduce the risk of gambling-related harm.

An increasing number of persons have enrolled in the VSE program remotely. Due to COVID-19, the MGC began to allow persons to enroll from anywhere using a computer or mobile device with email access and video capabilities.

"We know that problem gambling can have devastating consequences, not just to the individual but everyone around them. Enrolling in the VSE program can be a significant step towards better health and relationships" said **Marlene Warner**, Executive Director of the MACGH.

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### **How to enroll in a VSE?**

By phone: Call the 24-hour Safer Gaming Education Line at 1-800-426-1234.



Massachusetts Gaming Commission

101 Federal Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, Massachusetts 02110 | TEL 617.979.8400 | FAX 617.725.0258 | [www.massgaming.com](http://www.massgaming.com)

Online chat: Chat via the [GameSense website](#), available 24 hours a day.

In-person: To schedule an appointment to enroll in the Massachusetts Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program, please contact the Massachusetts Gaming Commission at 617.533.9737 or email [vse@massgaming.gov](mailto:vse@massgaming.gov). Alternatively, you may visit any GameSense Info Center during casino operating hours without an appointment.

Enrollment locations are:

- GameSense Info Centers, Located in Plainridge Park Casino, MGM Springfield, and Encore Boston Harbor
- Massachusetts Gaming Commission, Located in Boston
- A network of designated agents comprises treatment providers and counselors who are trained in Massachusetts Voluntary Self Exclusion enrollment. [Click here to access the designated agent list.](#)

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### **About GameSense**

Introduced by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC) 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. In addition to being licensed and utilized across Massachusetts, it is now the brand used at all North American MGM Resort casino properties, the Connecticut Lottery, and across Canada.

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. Learn more online at [GameSenseMA.com](#).

### **About the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health**

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health is a private, non-profit public health agency. We advocate for responsible gaming and gambling practices and services for those affected by gambling. We aim to reduce the impacts of gambling disorder and strive to make gambling healthy and safe for the people of Massachusetts. We are neither for nor against legalized gambling. We accomplish our mission through education, advocacy, and providing resources. We serve people who gamble, their families, caregivers, and the community at large. For more information, visit [MACGH.org](#).

### **About Mass. Gaming Commission**

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](#)) or Facebook [www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm](http://www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm)



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