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## **The Massachusetts Gaming Commission Debuts Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program for Sports Wagering**

Ahead of the launch of sports wagering in the Commonwealth on January 31, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) is expanding options to help people to control their gambling. The MGC today announced that a Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE) list has been established specifically for sports wagering.

Since the first casino in Massachusetts opened in 2015, more than 1,700 people have enrolled a VSE program for casino gaming and today there are 1,329 individuals enrolled. The VSE programs are designed to allow those who want to regain control a means to restrict their access to gambling for a pre-determined amount of time. With the introduction of sports wagering, individuals will have the option to self-exclude from casino gaming floors, retail and digital sportsbooks, or both forms of gambling.

Individuals interested in excluding themselves just from retail sportsbook locations or mobile/online sports wagering app are able to avail themselves of this option over the phone (1.800.GAM.1234), online ([www.gamesensema.com](http://www.gamesensema.com)), or in-person at a GameSense Info Centers at PPC, MGM and/or EBH. More information on the program can be found by visiting the [Massachusetts Gaming Commission Website](#). Those currently on the casino VSE list will remain so and will continue to be excluded from the casino floor including the soon to be opened sportsbooks.

According to a [2022 study](#) conducted by researchers at UMass Amherst, an estimated 13-20% of Massachusetts adults have engaged in sports betting ahead of the law that legalized sports wagering in the Commonwealth. The same study found evidence that the introduction of sports wagering and participation in sports wagering led to an increase in gambling harms.

“VSE programs are proven to be a successful tool for those who need a break from gambling to manage their own play,” said MGC Chair Cathy Judd-Stein. “In light of research we have at our disposal, the MGC and our licensees are committed to offering these types of programs and a range of other resources to help gamblers in the Commonwealth.”

An early evaluation of the VSE program in Massachusetts found that enrollees reported significant improvements in gambling problems, mental health, and relationship quality six-months after enrolling. “While VSE is one way to help people struggling with a gambling problem, we highly recommend they also seek treatment from a qualified clinician” said Mark Vander Linden, MGC Director of Research and Responsible Gaming. The Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline (800-327-5050) can provide callers with information about treatment and other resources.

“Massachusetts has provided innovation and leadership in the realms of problem and responsible gambling,” said Marlene Warner, CEO, Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health. “This early and comprehensive approach to VSE continues in that tradition. We hope that anyone in need of a conversation and some help with minimizing the impact gambling has on their life will consider this evidence-based program.”



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