

Gaming *focus*

A Newsletter for Industry Members

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Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

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Our Mission:

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG), established in 1988, is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational and advocacy corporation under contract with Florida state government. The FCCG's primary mission is to help persons adversely affected by difficulties due to problem and compulsive gambling. The FCCG maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling while seeking to assist citizens in need of support. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the FCCG is an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

Gaming FOCUS - An Ongoing Partnership in Progress

Welcome to the first edition of our gaming newsletter. This publication is in response to a request from you to be provided with up-to-date information on gambling, responsible gaming and player protection programming. In April 2008, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) met with representatives of the Mardi Gras Racetrack & Gaming Center, the Isle of Capri Casino, and GulfStream Park Racing & Casino to further dialogues about responsible gaming protocols, employee training and related issues. The Agency also held a focus group forum, which allowed facility personnel to share observations and to provide input as to which elements or information would prove most meaningful during FCCG trainings. The FCCG will be incorporating this insight by expanding upon existing programming and identifying strategies for increasing awareness among gaming industry employees and patrons.



One of the recommendations was to develop a newsletter for gaming members in an effort to communicate important information to employees. Additional ideas generated by the focus group included:

- Providing information via payday stuffers, posters and other means
- Designing new patron collateral materials featuring the 24-hour HelpLine number
- Research regarding approaches in addressing a diverse problem gambling population
- Background about self-exclusion programs (see page 3)
- Coping mechanisms for dealing with gamblers on emotional roller coasters
- Statistics as to what the research shows in the field
- Information about FCCG HelpLine programs and services
- Knowing what to do and where to turn when different situations arise

FCCG's Certification Program Offers Seal of Approval

Most people who gamble do so for pleasure and without difficulty. However, there are people who cannot gamble with control - problem gamblers. The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) designed its Responsible Gaming and Player Protection Program to enable gaming operators to develop a system that could provide employees and patrons with important information about problem gambling and avenues for accessing help. The Program also assists industry members in identifying when

persons may be showing signs of a gambling problem.

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's RGPPP helps gaming operators to develop a comprehensive site-specific plan. The RGPPP outlines basic principles and guidelines, while allowing facilities the opportunity to tailor the plan to meet operational needs. The FCCG is now offering a "Seal of Approval" for gaming industry operators who comply with certification requirements of the Agency's Responsible Gaming and Player Protection Program (RGPPP). For more information, contact the FCCG HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT or email us at fccg@gamblinghelp.org.



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Mardi Gras Racetrack & Gaming Center is Right on Track

An interview with Mardi Gras Racetrack & Gaming Center's Vice-President, Dan Adkins, confirms facility's Responsible Gaming and Player Protection Program is right on track:

- Q. *Have you noticed any changes at the Mardi Gras facility since offering slot machines?*
- R. The biggest change observed is the increase in client volume. We are now an entertainment venue and offer a variety of choices (i.e. slots, restaurants, greyhound racing, poker and simulcast).
- Q. *Do you feel that problem gambling is an issue worthy of address by your industry?*
- R. Problem gambling is "ABSOLUTELY" an issue worth addressing in the gaming industry. We are here to offer entertainment and pleasure for our patrons and players. Once a person views casinos as a place to make money for a living, it's definitely a problem. When it's no longer fun and one loses control, this is the time when those of us in the industry need to step in and offer help. At the same time, the gambler must be ready to admit that s/he has a gambling problem.
- Q. *What steps has Mardi Gras taken to raise awareness about problem gambling among its patron and employee populations?*
- R. We believe we stand in the forefront insofar as raising awareness. There are brochures and signage on compulsive gambling with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's HelpLine number throughout the facility. The number is included in all marketing, advertising and collateral materials; newspapers, direct mailers, magazines, rack cards, etc. The message reading 'When gambling is no longer a game... The first step to getting help is admitting it. 1-888-ADMIT-IT' is spread out across our facility.

It is very important for Mardi Gras employees to understand problem gambling, to know how to spot a patron who is experiencing difficulty and how to assist when this person may finally be ready to admit s/he has a problem. Therefore, it is company policy that each employee attends a mandatory compulsive gambling training course in the beginning of their employment. During the training, employees also role play on how to react and assist a problem gambler or family member, once they present for help. Employees are taught that they are not here to judge but rather to help when a patron is ready for assistance. That's when the caring comes in.

- Q. *Do you offer a self-exclusion program? If yes, provide some background.*
- R. We had the option to allow patrons to self-exclude for a period of 2 years, 5 years or lifetime. We chose lifetime and believe it was the right decision. Our program has been very successful in just one year's time. Patrons are required to admit they have

"Patrons are required to admit they have a gambling problem. Mardi Gras' responsibility at that point is to show them how to access the help they need."

When gambling is no longer a game...

The first move to getting help is admitting it.
1-888-ADMIT-IT

Confidential 24-Hour Problem Gambling HelpLine

Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.

MARDI GRAS GAMING

a gambling problem. Mardi Gras' responsibility at that point is to show them how to access the help they need. Usually, the player works with personnel in the Player's Club, Security or an employee on the casino floor. Patrons are escorted to a private room where the issue is addressed and paperwork is completed.

Once an individual is self-excluded and allows Mardi Gras to help, their picture is taken, as well as a copy of their driver's license. Thereafter, an incident report is filled out and submitted to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. In instances when a patron is part of the Player's Club, s/he will be archived from the system. They will no longer receive any direct mailers with advertising, promotions or other such items. Their picture s also placed in the Security Office.

Q. *Has the FCCG played a role in the programming you have implemented? If so, how?*

- R. Mardi Gras is required by law to have a compulsive gambling program in place. We have worked diligently to have slots here in Florida, so we have chosen to make the commitment to take a pro-active role.

The FCCG conducted the first classes. They helped us to get the program up and running. They really paved the way for us. FCCG provides us with plenty of giveaways from pens, coasters, etc. with the HelpLine number, that we in turn provide to patrons.

Self-Exclusion Programs Offer Mutual Benefits

Many operators of gaming facilities have developed programs to allow customers to voluntarily self-exclude in instances when a gambler has lost control of their gambling and is no longer in charge of their behaviors. Such action provides a built-in self-protective measure for those gamblers whose lives have become so unmanageable that they require a gaming operator's assistance in assuring they cannot return to the facility to gamble. While self-exclusion policies and provisions vary between gaming operators, it is important to understand how self-exclusion works and why certain elements are essential components. It is also vital to recognize how these programs offer mutual benefits to both gaming patrons and industry operators.

“Self-excluding gamblers should be removed from facility mailing lists to assure they do not receive notifications, which could serve as a temptation for returning.”

What does self-exclusion provide?

- ✓ Once a gambler has self-excluded, s/he is placed on a list that alerts designated facility personnel. When the program works well, these gamblers will be unable to place wagers and be required to leave the gaming area or be subject to arrest for trespassing. In addition, they are unable to collect winnings or recover losses, cannot receive complimentary goods or services, credit or check cashing

privileges, or offered any other amenities by the establishment. Moreover, self-excluding gamblers should be removed from facility mailing lists to assure they do not receive notifications, which could serve as a temptation for returning. Such omission also protects operators from potential liability claims.

Are gaming facilities required to institute self-exclusion programs?

- ✓ At this time, within the state of Florida, only gaming industry members statutorily required to institute such programs are pari-mutuel operations in Broward County, approved for slot machine operation. This action was the result of a public referendum and constitutional amendment. Other operators providing such programs have done so voluntarily.

Who can self-exclude?

- ✓ Only the gambler can self-exclude from gaining access to a gaming facility. Spouses or partners, family members, friends, employers, and others involved in the gambler's



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Top 10 Benefits of a Responsible Gaming Program

1. Acknowledges operator awareness that gambling can be a problem for a segment of population.
2. Reflects gaming establishment's commitment to assisting patrons experiencing difficulties.
3. Increases employee and public education of a 24-hour problem gambling helpline service.
4. Reduces harm to identified problem gamblers by cutting off certain options and limiting losses.
5. Trains management and employees of their roles in the responsible gaming program.
6. Enables designated and trained personnel to provide assistance through established protocols.
7. Assures appropriate advertising and marketing strategies to discourage problem betting behavior.
8. Recognizes that problem gambling is a liability to the gaming industry.
9. Internally provides support and assistance to facility staff that may experience difficulties.
10. Assists the gaming industry in integrating site-specific programs that incorporate organizational culture.

**Gambling Problem?
Yours?
A friend's?
A family member's?
Call the FCCG
24-hour HelpLine
888-ADMIT-IT
(888-236-4848)**

Self-Exclusion Programs Offer Mutual Benefits, continued

life are not able to exclude someone else. This assures that the gambler him/herself takes the necessary steps in acknowledging that gambling is a problem. Although there may be occasion for an exception to the rule, for the most part they are limited and rare in scope.

Why do timeframes vary?

- ✓ The period for which a customer can self-exclude is entirely up to each industry member. Some gaming locations offer lifetime exclusion, while others offer shorter time periods. Compulsive gamblers have a high rate of relapse within the first 12-month period, establishing a minimum of two years or more for self-exclusion provides the best chance for long-term benefit for patrons and gaming operators. Based upon the Council's experience in working with compulsive gamblers, the FCCG supports establishment of lifetime self-exclusion periods.

Why must a gambler present in person to self-exclude?

- ✓ Photo identification of a gambler serves as a protective measure for both the patron and facility. For one thing, it assures that facilities are self-excluding the person whose name appears on the application. Though many gamblers are reluctant to return to the facility, in fear they will be unable to control themselves from gambling, provisions can and should be made to assure they will refrain from such activity when on the premises (e.g. being accompanied by a trusted person and meeting a designated staff person at the facility at a scheduled time and location away from the gaming floor.).

Once a person self-excludes, can s/he gamble at another establishment?

- ✓ In some cases, self-exclusion will pertain to every property owned by a particular establishment, whereas in other instances, it will be restricted to the one location. In Florida,

self-exclusion is not reciprocal in all facilities so individuals wishing to self exclude must go to multiple locations. The industry is free to make such provisions as it deems appropriate for accepting exclusions from other locations. Such measures would serve as additional protection for self-excluding gamblers. It also will not require that they personally visit each facility to complete the exclusion process.

Who oversees self-exclusion at the facility level?

- ✓ Here again, protocols vary. While several facilities utilize security personnel, others establish positions and/or expand existing staff duties to include responsibilities related to a Responsible Gaming Program. Regardless of who is responsible, all gaming employees are typically required to know about the program and associated protocols in the event a patron is seeking assistance.

Can a person be reinstated after the self-exclusion period is expired?

- ✓ Some facilities that offer options for periods less than lifetime exclusion, allow patrons to return to gambling upon completing their term. In such cases, the gambler is generally required to undergo a reapplication process to assure they can gamble responsibly. (Note: Based upon the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling's experience, compulsive gamblers generally lack the ability to gamble safely or responsibly over a period of time. The philosophy of "once a compulsive gambler, always a compulsive gambler" is typically true.)

The FCCG has designed a new self-exclusion brochure, which is a two-sided placard outlining important points for patrons to know, which is available to gaming operators at no cost. To place your order, call our HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT or send us an email at fccg@gamblinghelp.org.

Staying Connected

Be sure to check out our next edition of **Gaming FOCUS**, featuring information about the FCCG's 24-hour HelpLine, as well as case scenarios and strategies for addressing challenging circumstances that arise in a gaming environment. Also, feel free to share your ideas with us. You can call, email or forward your thoughts by mail:

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