

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*

A Newsletter for Industry Members

Volume 3, 2010

A Call for Action from One of Your Own

Recently, the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling interviewed Steve Calabro, Corporate Vice President of Gaming Operations for Magna Entertainment, which owns Gulfstream Park in Broward County, Florida, to discuss self-exclusion programs.

How long have you been in the gambling industry?

Prior to Magna Entertainment, most of my 29 years have been spent working in Atlantic City, New Jersey, with Trump and Harrah's Casinos.

In your view, what is a self-exclusion program?

A self-exclusion program is all about doing the right thing. It allows customers who have self-identified that gambling is a problem to stop by opting into a program that restricts them from returning to one or more gaming properties.

What are the benefits of self-exclusion?

Self-exclusion helps guests with gambling problems to take control of their lives. It establishes restrictions so that if excluded customers return to a facility to gamble, they will be unable to collect winnings. It is intended to assist a person who feels they have a gambling problem to take the time necessary to step away for a minimum period up to a lifetime.

How does self-exclusion work?

First, self-exclusion should be part of a bigger umbrella. It typically is one component within a broader responsible gambling program. Generally speaking, employees are trained about responsible gambling policies and how to best serve and protect guests. Upon a guest approaching an employee, a trained supervisor will be brought into the process to explain the self-exclusion program, to assure the patron understands all conditions, and to assist in the proper completion of paperwork for submission to the regulatory authority.

Are there any challenges associated with self-exclusion programs in Florida?

The process to self-exclude needs to be done with relative ease and shouldn't be difficult

because it will discourage use. In order to work well, self-exclusion needs to be embraced by customers, gaming industry operators, and state government. In Florida, patrons have a very difficult time self-excluding because they are required to visit each pari-mutuel facility versus utilizing a centralized program. This is also true for certain gaming operators who own numerous establishments and require excluded guests to visit each of their properties. The more complicated the process, such as requiring that guests travel to different facilities, is unrealistic and not effective.

“In Florida, customers have a very difficult time self-excluding because they are required to visit each pari-mutuel facility versus utilizing a centralized program.”

Do you have any suggestions to alleviate challenges?

Self-exclusion should be centralized and administered by a government agency. Most gaming jurisdictions have a regulatory body that understands the importance of this oversight.

Right now is a perfect opportunity for Florida state government to take a step in the right direction by instituting a centralized system. This would only require an excluded guest to complete the necessary form at one casino. The facility would then submit the form to the State's regulatory authority, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). In turn, DBPR would distribute to all casinos and other facilities they manage and can update as necessary by placing the information into a centralized location. This can also be done by the Seminole Tribe, which oversees several casinos in Florida.

Essentially, State government needs to understand that a responsible gaming program can only work best when centralized and when it is a cooperative effort between gamblers, gaming operators, and regulators.

The FCCG's Take on Self-Exclusion

Gambling is a problem whenever it negatively impacts upon any aspect of a person's life. In instances when a gambler has lost control of their behaviors, self-exclusion provides an opportunity to exclude oneself from returning to a gaming facility.

- The ability to gain access to gamble during the exclusionary period (e.g., no ID checks at door).
- Securing money to gamble at the facility while excluded (e.g. onsite ATMs, check cashing, etc.)
- Inability to recover losses or winnings during the exclusionary period.
- Receiving solicitations from the gambling establishment enticing excluded guests to return.
- Not receiving appropriate assistance from facility personnel when inquiring about self-exclusion.
- Encountering employee resistance when trying to exclude for a lifetime vs. a shorter period of time.

gamblers and industry in order to work properly. (See Calabro interview on page 1.)

To foster the necessary cooperation, the FCCG offers the following suggestions:

1. Utilize a government operated centralized self-exclusion program.
2. Assure that human resource, security and other personnel are committed to program purpose.
3. Develop protocols precluding excluded gamblers from returning.
4. Enforce violations when barred gamblers return to facilities.
5. Establish a dedicated fund for state-funded treatment from excluded gambler winnings.

Most gaming facilities in Florida and elsewhere do offer self-exclusion programs, which allow customers to voluntarily bar themselves from certain establishments in order to restrict their access to gambling. However, restrictions, enforcement, and general program provisions vary widely, even within the same establishment which may operate several facilities.

Essentially, self-exclusion is a binding agreement between a gambler and a gaming facility to prohibit return to the property. It exists for a specified period of time, identified by the gambler, typically ranging from one year to a lifetime. Once the self-exclusion process has been initiated, all marketing and promotional mailings (e.g., coupons, free play enticements, other solicitations) cease.

Though self-exclusion is intended to provide a therapeutic benefit to problem gamblers, oftentimes the manner in which it is implemented can create significant challenges to gamblers. According to information reported to the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, the most commonly reported challenges include:

- Requiring excluded gamblers travel to multiple facilities for restriction to apply.
- Necessitating that gamblers self-exclude in person, thereby requiring they return to facilities.

It is also important to note that loved ones of gamblers report frustration with the requirement that only the gamblers themselves can self-exclude. With rare exception (e.g., certain medical conditions), gamblers are required to self-exclude in person.

A chief consideration for industry to keep in mind is that unfortunately, although self-excluded gamblers have a strong desire to stop gambling, at times, many are unable to control their urges or impulses to return to a facility in order to place that next bet. In light of this reality, while it is the excluded guest's primary responsibility to adhere to the agreed upon restrictions, the burden of protection ultimately rests with gambling operators. This is particularly true since relapse is fairly common among compulsive gamblers during their first 12 months of recovery.

Steve Calabro, a longtime gaming industry professional, asserts that self-exclusion requires cooperation between government,

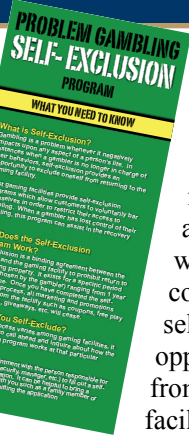
The FCCG agrees with the current position that barred guests should remain unable to financially benefit from winnings when gaining access to an excluded property. However, it is the Agency's contention that the same standard should hold true for industry operators, in that neither should be able to retain such winnings. It is the FCCG's position that these monies could more appropriately be earmarked to support state-funded treatment for problem gambling, with a percentage set aside for the government oversight authority.

When managed properly, self-exclusion can provide therapeutic benefits to problem gamblers and loved ones. Appropriate administration will also reduce potential liability on the part of industry operators. For more information on self-exclusion or to obtain free copies of the FCCG's "Problem Gambling Self-Exclusion Program" for distribution use to facility guests, call the Agency HelpLine at 888-ADMIT-IT or email us at fccg@gamblinghelp.org.

Avoiding Common Pitfalls of Self-Exclusion

The FCCG offers the following guidelines to avoid pitfalls commonly associated with self-exclusion.

- Implement self-exclusion protocols as part of a broader responsible gaming program.
- Assure that excluded guests are barred from gambling at all Florida facilities.
- Utilize exclusionary periods starting with two years since relapse is prevalent during first year.
- Bar excluded guests from being able to return to a property to partake in non-gambling amenities because for compulsive gamblers the temptation to gamble is too high.
- Create protocols that will prohibit excluded patrons from being able to cash checks, obtain cash advances on credit cards, use facility ATMs, or access money through other means on-site.
- Enforce program restrictions and requirements at all times with facility employees and guests.
- Take the time to explain the importance of self-exclusion and the role and benefits of the FCCG's 24-hour Problem Gambling HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT) to employees and patrons. (See page 3 article.)





Leading By Example

By **Carolynn R. Trabue**

*Director of Regulatory Compliance/RGPPP Manager
Calder Casino & Race Course in Hollywood, Florida*

Upon reintroducing poker and bringing a casino online, it was time for Calder Casino & Race Course to expand its Responsible Gaming Program by developing and implementing a more detailed and localized plan. While we understood that some requirements were state mandated, we wanted to go a step further by providing a more organized and educational program for team members. To simplify the process, we have been working closely with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) and utilizing the organization's tools, which has enabled us to be online for opening day in late January 2010.

Though we are currently in the midst of completing program details, we have made the fundamental decisions about the soon to be unveiled Responsible Gaming Program, which will include a self-exclusion component and feature some of the benefits listed below:

- Training will incorporate all facility areas and employees regardless of department.
- Signage and literature about the FCCG's 24-hour HelpLine (888-ADMIT-IT) will be posted in public areas, as well as within the Grand Stand facility, poker room, and casino.
- Guests will be provided with helpful information about FCCG HelpLine services.
- Literature about Calder's self-exclusion program will be readily available in prominent locations throughout the facility.
- The self-exclusion program will exclude guests from participating in gambling, as well as in all amenities offered at the property, including restaurants, and will preclude them from receiving marketing materials.
- Security Shift Managers will assure that the self-exclusion program is explained and understood by all patrons who request information.
- Self-exclusion options will include a lifetime ban.
- Though persons who opt out can reinstate at the facility, before this determination is made conclusive, it must first be reviewed and approved by the "Responsible Gaming Committee," comprised of seven managers.
- If a self-excluded guest returns to the facility, s/he will be furnished with a copy of the paperwork completed and escorted to the exit. Thereafter, in the event a guest returns, s/he will be subject to trespassing and arrest.

"Basically, self-exclusion provides a step in the right direction and sometimes is the very first step a guest will take toward their own recovery."

The Responsible Gaming Program (RGP) is important to educate team members and guests that Calder recognizes that some people have a problem with gambling. We are committed to providing assistance to people seeking help. Self-exclusion is equally important because it is our way of aiding guests who feel they have a problem. Basically, self-exclusion provides a step in the right direction and sometimes is the very first step a guest will take toward their own recovery.

The guidance supplied by the FCCG has been invaluable. The organization provided a wealth of materials and aided us in developing the policy and program components. In October 2009, the FCCG conducted a "new hire" presentation as part of our RGP and nearly 200 existing and new employees completed the program and received materials. The FCCG will return when we complete our mass hiring, at which time approximately 250 more employees will undergo the training.

Calder is committed to working with other gaming industry members and is looking to set the standard as a role model by leading by example. As we approach the final stages of the Responsible Gambling Program's formation, we welcome our industry colleagues to join us in this important initiative.

"As we approach the final stages of the Responsible Gambling Program's formation, we welcome our industry colleagues to join us in this important initiative."

from

THE FLOOR of Florida Pari-Mutuels

Through your eyes... in your words.

Gaming employees are typically very familiar with the gamblers they routinely see, as well as those who appear to be experiencing some level of difficulty. While facility staff is not trained to assess for gambling problems, the FCCG's professional training for industry members does help to highlight warning signs, strategies and innovative approaches for addressing various situations employees often encounter. The FCCG is proud to report that the feedback received to date has been extremely positive.

Listed below are some of the more recent comments received from pari-mutuel facility employees regarding FCCG training, self-exclusion, and other issues... in their own words.

Shuttle Driver:

Before the FCCG training, I had no idea how to handle some of the things I see. I have shuttled people to and from the casino for years and sometimes it just breaks my heart to see them emotionally distraught and to listen to their stories as I drive them to their car. They will tell me how bad they lost and even say they can't go home and tell family members. There have been times when I felt I should not allow them to leave because they were in such bad shape; it's not only dangerous for them but for others on the road. Now I know what to do. I will tell them about the FCCG and give them a helpline card; they can use my phone if they want or I can drive them back to the casino and ask security to provide them a place to call. I would like to get some helpline cards to keep in the shuttle if that's okay.

FCCG Comment: You got it!

Check Cashing Attendant:

A woman approached me and asked to self-exclude. As I began talking to her, she revealed she had excluded at two other casinos in the area within recent months and now felt it was time to self-exclude here. As the conversation continued, I discovered she had been coming to our facility to gamble since self-excluding elsewhere and had been gambling all day prior to approaching me. When I offered to escort her to the area for self-exclusion, she said, "Wait, I still have \$100 to gamble with before I do this."

FCCG Comment: We believe it!

Bartender:

I see and hear a lot as the alcohol flows. Patrons share their gambling hard luck stories with me and it's sometimes heartbreaking. After this training, I will be prepared to handle things differently.

FCCG Comment: Terrific!

Attendant (Bet Placing Window):

I have been in this business all my life. I grew up with this business as I watched my father go to work at the casinos every day. I too have worked in the casinos and surrounded myself with the casino lifestyle for many years, knowing my patrons on a first name basis and hearing their stories. I can tell you that the FCCG's numbers are off in regard to the percentages of problem and compulsive gamblers. I don't have scientific data but real life data and I think the percentage of people suffering from this addiction is considerably higher than the numbers being reported.

FCCG Comment: Thanks for the insight!

Security:

I find homeless men in the parking lot looking for change and low level winning tickets that people didn't bother to turn in. Generally, I have to ask them to leave the premises. I was really bothered by this and found a nearby shelter that agreed to allow me to offer their services to these men. My first experience with offering the shelter was incredible. I offered a gentleman to be transported to the shelter for a meal and bed for the night and he accepted. As we were riding in the car, he shared his story that he did have a job and home but due to hardships had lost everything. I cannot say if this man was a compulsive gambler, which attributed to his hardships, but I can say that he was familiar with the casinos. We talked and he truly wanted to turn his life around. I will never know the outcome but the good news is I haven't seen him here since.

FCCG Comment: Thanks to you, FCCG HelpLine cards are now provided to the homeless at this shelter!

Thanks for the great feedback. Keep sending your comments by phone or email!