

GAMBLING EXCLUSION / SELF-EXCLUSION PROGRAMS

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit public health agency dedicated to providing leadership to reduce the social, financial, and emotional costs of problem gambling and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including: information and public awareness, community education and professional training, advocacy, and helpline / referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones and the greater community.

As we will discuss in this fact sheet, exclusion programs are an option for some people who are trying to limit or abstain from gambling. In addition to discussing the potential benefits of exclusion programs, we will discuss the potential limitations of such programs.

TYPES/DESCRIPTIONS OF EXCLUSION PROGRAMS

- **Self-exclusion programs:** A player-initiated, voluntary form of exclusion that provides gamblers with the opportunity to ban themselves from gambling venues. These programs are designed to limit an individual's access to gambling opportunities and, in turn, help the individual to abstain from gambling.
 - Several states and countries have implemented self-exclusion programs. In these state-wide and country-wide programs, an individual is excluded from all state-sanctioned gambling venues, including tribal casinos.
 - **State-wide and country-wide self-exclusion programs** (not exhaustive): Connecticut, Missouri, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Arizona, Oklahoma, California, Kansas, Canada (except Quebec), Australia (most states), Netherlands, France, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and South Africa.
 - Specific tribal casinos in the state of Washington allow individuals to self-exclude from those specific establishments.
 - There are also specific gambling providers that offer self-exclusion programs.
 - **Gambling providers with self-exclusion programs:** All American Gaming Association member venues and some multinational casino companies.
- **Involuntary exclusion programs:** A type of exclusion issued to an individual by a gambling provider (usually a casino). Gambling providers reserve the right to exclude individuals from their premises for any reason (such as dishonest gambling practices or disorderly conduct). In some instances, a state gaming board will exclude (or ban) an individual from gambling at any state-sanctioned gambling venues (usually casinos).¹
 - **Involuntary exclusion programs in other parts of the world:** In some eastern countries (e.g., China), there are regulations that also allow for others (i.e., family) to exclude an individual from casinos.² In addition, some eastern countries have regulations that state that individuals who are bankrupt and/or receiving financial aid from the government are automatically excluded from entering the casinos.²

LENGTH OF EXCLUSION ORDERS

- Exclusion bans may be for a limited time (such as 6 months, 1 year, or 5 years) or a lifetime.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING AN EXCLUSION ORDER

- Although the consequences of violating self-exclusion orders differ, they typically involve the following:
 - Being escorted off the premises
 - Forfeiter of winnings
 - Potential criminal (i.e., trespassing) charges³

BURDEN OF ENFORCEMENT

- In exclusion programs, the gambling provider (usually a casino) is responsible for identifying and keeping out excluders.

LIMITATIONS OF SELF-EXCLUSION PROGRAMS

- Self-exclusion agreements are not necessarily legally enforceable.
- Research indicates that self-exclusion programs result in a percentage (22-55%) of self-excluders entering casinos undetected, thereby breaching their contracts.^{4,6}

EFFICACY OF SELF-EXCLUSION PROGRAMS

- Despite these limitations, self-exclusion programs have shown some efficacy.
 - Two longitudinal studies that provide evidence for efficacy. These studies found that after being in a self-exclusion program, self-excluders reported significant improvements in the following areas:
 - Gambling frequency and intensity⁴
 - The rate of pathological gambling (declined from 79% at enrollment to 15% at follow-up)⁴
 - Number of gambling problems^{4, 6}
 - Intensity of negative consequences of gambling⁶
 - Sense of control and urge to gamble⁶

HELP FOR THOSE WITH GAMBLING PROBLEMS:

Help for people experiencing problems with gambling, their family members, and the greater community is available:

- The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling operates a free, confidential Helpline (800-426-1234) and website: www.masscompulsivegambling.org. In addition, the Mass. Council trains clinicians and maintains a list of professionals who have earned their Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate (MAPGS).
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health funds treatment centers throughout the state. Many clinicians have earned the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate and understand both the differences and similarities among problem gambling and alcohol and other substance use disorders (<http://www.mass.gov/dph/bsas>).
- Many people experiencing problems with gambling can attend meetings through Gamblers Anonymous (GA; <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org>) or Bettors Anonymous (BA; <http://www.bettorsanonymous.org/>).
- Spouses, significant others, and family members of people experiencing problems with gambling can attend Gam-Anon (<http://www.gam-anon.org/>), a fellowship that meets to share experiences about living with a disordered gambler.

For more information or to have a packet of materials sent to you, please visit www.masscompulsivegambling.org, call the Mass. Council Helpline (800-426-1234), e-mail the Council at gambling@aol.com, or visit 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110-3031.

REFERENCES CITED: EXCLUSION PROGRAMS FACT SHEET

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