

# Fact Sheet

## Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program & Ongoing Research

August 2018

BCLC's [Voluntary Self-Exclusion \(VSE\) program](#) is a resource for people who want to restrict themselves from gaming venues and/or PlayNow.com. VSE is a voluntary program, a personal commitment, and a tool that may assist people with better managing their decisions to gamble.

The VSE program is one of several tools available to help people with problems related to gambling. The B.C. Government also offers free problem-gambling counseling throughout the province.

Self-exclusion programs are an industry standard in Canada and BCLC is committed to following best practices and ongoing improvement.

### Program Details

VSE is a personal choice: people cannot exclude a family member or friend. Individuals can exclude themselves from one or all of the following gaming venues:

- All venues with slot machines, including casinos, community gaming centres and casinos located at race tracks (anyone who chooses this option is automatically self-excluded from PlayNow.com);
- All commercial bingo halls; and/or,
- PlayNow.com.

Individuals choose the length of time for their self-exclusion: six months, or one, two or three years. Once made, the commitment cannot be revoked. When signing up for VSE, individuals are offered a referral to a problem-gambling counsellor and are removed from BCLC and service provider direct marketing lists.

### Ongoing Research

In 2013, BCLC contracted with researchers at the University of the Fraser Valley to conduct a four-year longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of the Voluntary Self-Exclusion program. This is a follow up longitudinal study of one initially conducted in 2007, and [released in 2011](#).

This latest study, released in 2017 and titled [BCLC's Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program: Perceptions and Experiences of a Sample of Program Participants](#), provides an objective, empirically-based assessment of VSE in B.C. as experienced by VSE participants.

Key findings include:

- 93% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with VSE program.
- 97% would recommend the program to others.
- 74% of VSE enrollees met criteria for problem gamblers on the decreasing [Problem Gambling Severity Index](#) (PGSI).
- 25% of clients attempted to violate their VSE agreement, a decrease of 10% from the 2011 VSE Longitudinal Study. The study points to the VSE Jackpot disentanglement rule as possible contributing factor.

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- Across the entire observation period, PGSI scores dropped substantially for program participants. One year after enrolling in the VSE program, the average PGSI score for study participants was in the low-risk category for problem gambling.

The study provides [10 recommendations](#), several of which BCLC has taken steps to address, under the themes of: Increasing Enrollment, Preventing Violations and Connecting with Counselling. The two most common recommendations, from participants themselves, were better methods of detecting excluded gamblers who attempt to enter a casino, and more advertising of the program to facilitate enrollment earlier in an individual's progression towards problem-gambling behaviour.

BCLC is focusing on outcome-based performance measures of its responsible gambling programming in order to track and better gauge effectiveness of its programs and practices. This latest VSE study, along with other research initiatives underway, reflects BCLC's commitment to player health and incorporating key learnings from research and harm reduction approaches applied to other types of addictions.

## Helping people honour their commitment

BCLC has tools in place to help self-excluded individuals honour their commitment.

ID scanners at the entrance of all B.C. casinos and recognition technology detect minors and help identify VSE patrons.

As part of their VSE agreement, participants are not eligible to win prizes in gaming facilities or online. So, if a participant gambles, wins a prize and is identified as self-excluded, BCLC will not pay the prize. This removes any financial incentive to breach the self-exclusion agreement.

BCLC is committed to helping self-excluded individuals honour their commitment. In 2017/18 fiscal year, security staff identified and removed VSE individuals 9,563 times through various means including staff detection, ineligible wins and recognition technology. Further [VSE data](#) is available on [bclc.com](http://bclc.com).

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### For more information contact:

BCLC Media Relations 604.225.6460

[mediarelations@bclc.com](mailto:mediarelations@bclc.com)