

## PLAYER HEALTH IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

### PROBLEM GAMBLING PREVALENCE

- Problem gambling is defined as any gambling behaviour that compromises, disrupts or damages one or more areas of a person's life. This can include problems with personal relationships, family, friends, finances, school or work.
- In 2019/20, BCLC found that eight per cent of players scored as high risk on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI).<sup>1</sup> In 2020/21, BCLC's target is to reduce this to seven per cent.

### BCLC'S PLAYER HEALTH GOALS AND AMBITION

- BCLC top corporate-strategic goal as outlined in the [2021/22 – 2023/24 Service Plan](#), is that no one is harmed from gambling offered by BCLC. BCLC is working towards this goal by committing to responsible growth derived from healthy play.
- BCLC's player health ambition is to have the healthiest players in the world. Working towards realizing this ambition, BCLC has aligned its work to create products, environments and services that are safe for players around four key commitments: informed decisions, positive play, referral and support and safer products and environments.
- BCLC has outlined two key objectives aligned with its player health ambition: Players gamble within their time and money limits and players who exhibit high-risk behaviours reduce their time and money spent or stop gambling all together.

### GAMESENSE:

- Launched in 2009, GameSense is BCLC's player-health program, designed to assist players in making informed decisions about gambling and connect them to resources.
- GameSense Advisors provide information and support to players at GameSense Information Centres in all casinos and community gaming centres. They are excellent listeners there to help players understand how the games work, make informed choices about gambling to keep play positive, and can help connect players to available support resources if they feel they need help.
- In April 2020, BCLC enhanced access to GameSense Advisors by expanding their supports to players through the live-chat function on PlayNow.com and via phone at 1.800.815.0222.
- BCLC has licensed GameSense to 13 gaming organizations in Canada and the U.S.: AGLC (Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis), SaskGaming, SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority), Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries, Massachusetts Gaming Commission, Connecticut Lottery and MGM Resorts International.

### VOLUNTARY SELF-EXCLUSION (VSE) PROGRAM:

- 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 either on PlayNow.com or at a facility.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on a continuous tracking survey conducted online with a sample size of 2,000 players. An eight per cent rate is substantially higher than the 0.7 per cent high-risk rate from the 2014 provincial problem gambling prevalence study, which utilized data from telephone surveys. BCLC is using online surveys in the PGSI, as current research indicates that online surveys support the most accurate results because participants find it easier to answer honestly, anonymously, online.

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- Individuals must self-enroll and can 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.
- In 2019/2020, BCLC's VSE program had approximately 8,000 enrollees.
- In 2019/2020, casino staff identified and removed individuals enrolled in the VSE program 9, 249 times through various means including staff detection, ineligible wins and recognition technology. Approximately 27 per cent of VSE individuals who are known to have violated their self-exclusion commitment account for 80 per cent of total reported violations.
- BCLC contracted with researchers at the University of the Fraser Valley to completed two longitudinal evaluation studies on the effectiveness of the Voluntary Self-Exclusion program; a third study is underway. The second study, [\*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 participants and provides [10 recommendations](#), several of which BCLC has taken steps to address including: increasing enrollment, preventing violations and connecting with counselling.

### OTHER INITIATIVES:

- In 2020, BCLC received the World Lottery Association's (WLA) Level 4 certification for excellence in responsible-gambling programming for the fourth consecutive time. Level 4 is the highest level of certification granted by the WLA's Independent Assessment Panel (IAP) under the Responsible Gambling Framework.
- The Province of B.C. and BCLC renewed an investment of \$1.36 million over five years to the UBC Centre for Gambling Research.
- PlayNow.com provides significant safeguards to encourage healthy play, including: daily or weekly time limits, weekly deposit limits, session reminders and a session log that provides players with clear visibility into their play activity and a short-term lockout function for players who want to set up a break from their gambling.
- In fall 2019, BCLC launched an optional time and budgeting tool on slot machines, called PlayPlanner, to help players manage their gambling activity.
- BCLC provides mandatory Appropriate Response Training for all front-line gaming staff.
- BCLC hosts the annual New Horizons in Responsible Gambling conference for attendees to learn about new developments and best practices in player health, as well as the prevention of problem gambling.

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