

## Voluntary Self-Exclusion Programs

### Q: What are Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE) Programs?

A: These programs allow individuals who feel they need a break from gambling to voluntarily exclude themselves from certain casinos/bingo halls and gambling websites for a specific amount of time. Those who self-exclude cannot enter the site while excluded, and, if caught, may be subjected to a range of penalties.

Source: <http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/docs/products/brochure-gamesense-voluntary-self-exclusion.pdf>

### Q: What is the nature of the British Columbia VSE program?

A: VSE programs are in place around the world, but they differ slightly by jurisdiction. In British Columbia, participants can choose from a 6-month, 12-month, 24-month, or a 36-month ban. The British Columbia Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program has three options:

- 1) Self-exclusion from all venues with slot machines, including casinos, community gaming centres with slot machines, and the gaming floor of racetracks with slot machines;
- 2) Self-exclusion from commercial bingo halls;
- 3) Self-exclusion from gambling on PayNow.com

source:

<http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/problem/treatment.html#voluntary>

Participants can choose as many options as they would like.

### Q: What are the benefits of the VSE program?

A: Some VSE participants simply need a mandatory time out from gambling. Other VSE participants enroll due to feelings of pathological gambling. In fact, a study by the BC Centre for Social Responsibility (BCCSR) found that 35% of VSE participants completely abstained from gambling while enrolled in the VSE program, which is a much more successful rate than found by program gambling services, such as Gambler's Anonymous. For some, the VSE program is sufficient to help them overcome the need to gamble. For those who need more support, enrolling in the VSE program can connect participants to available treatment services, as well as to other services, such as debt counselling.

**In 2007, 73% of British Columbians engaged in gambling. Of these, 29% did so on a weekly basis!!**

Source:

Ipsos Reid and Gemini Research, 2008

**4,491 individuals in B.C. registered for the VSE Program in 2009/2010**

source:

<http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/problem/docs/annual-rpt-rg-2009-10.pdf>

**7 million dollars was allocated to B.C.'s Responsible Gambling Strategy in 2007/08 for treatment, research, and prevention programs**

source:

[www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/problem/ps.html](http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/problem/ps.html)

**23% of gambling revenue in Canada is from problem gamblers**

source: Williams and Wood, 2004

**Common reasons for enrolling in VSE programs is to gain control over gambling and to seek help for gambling problems**

source: Nower and Blaszczynski, 2006

**Over 80% of all respondents in the BCCSR study reported that they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program.**

**Q: How often do individuals violate the program?**

A: In the BCCSR study, two-thirds of participants never tried to violate their agreement; however, around one-third tried to re-enter a casino in British Columbia at least once, and a small group repeatedly tried to return to a casino on a daily or weekly basis. Interestingly, participants who enrolled for 6-months were less likely to violate the program suggesting that taking small steps to control gambling behaviours may be the best approach.

**Q: What are some of the limitations of the VSE program?**

A: VSE participants who try to re-enter the casino often find it easy to do so undetected. However, the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC) has taken steps to improve detection of violators, such as by introducing license plate recognition technology and evaluating their facial recognition technology. Another challenge to the VSE program is that those who violate their agreement are often not penalized by the Gaming Policy Enforcement Branch; however, new jackpot rules implemented by BCLC mean that those who win money in British Columbia casinos while excluded cannot claim their winnings.

**Q: What can I do if I know somebody who could benefit from this program?**

A: Due to its voluntary nature, only those individuals who want to enroll can sign up for the program. However, you can help by giving them information about the program as participants in the BCCSR study often reported hearing about this program from family, friends, and fellow gamblers.

**Q: How do I obtain more information?**

A: For further details and information about how and where to sign up for the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program, contact the Problem Gambling Help Line at 1-888-795-6111. For any additional information, visit the BC Centre for Social Responsibility ([www.bccsr.ca](http://www.bccsr.ca)) at 1-877-388-8755. For the BCCSR's study, [http://www.ufv.ca/bccsr/Published\\_Research/Gaming.htm](http://www.ufv.ca/bccsr/Published_Research/Gaming.htm).

**Resources**

- BC Responsible Gambling – VSE Programs  
<http://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca/problem/treatment.html#voluntary>
- BCLC <http://bclc.com/cm/gamesense/voluntaryselfexclusion.htm>
- Ontario Responsible Gaming Council – Friends4Friends -  
<http://www.friends4friends.com/>
- Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission  
<http://www.aglc.gov.ab.ca/responsiblegambling/casino/VSEprogram.as>