

Special Industry Report

Editor's Introductory Remarks
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The research report that follows makes a significant contribution to the literature on Responsible Gaming Devices or RGDs. These are tools casinos can supply and gamblers can use to monitor their gaming habits. Conducted at the behest of the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, this study tested a specific RGD with focus groups in Las Vegas, Nevada.

People with gambling problems have trouble making sound gaming decisions and sticking to them as they attempt to control exorbitant losses and avoid negative consequences. Given such a predicament it would not be long before someone reached for modern technology to help players cope.

After all, if human thinking gets you into gambling trouble, why not let a high tech gadget or software program do the thinking and save some struggling soul precious cash and shameful regrets?

That is what RGDs purport to do. They may signal to the gambler that certain dollar amounts have been wagered, shut down a machine and refuse to let the gambler spend more dollars, or in some other way warn the gambler or prevent further expenditure.

Like many well-meaning solutions to excessive or destructive gambling, responsible gaming devices have their pros and cons. How much freedom do the gamblers retain? Can they change their mind and override the device? Might the machines violate a player's privacy by keeping track of normally excluded information?

This report gives a rather detailed account of a specific device at work and its outcome. The results: Participants generally favored the RGD tested and studied here for its opt-in approach and optional tracking features. Privacy issues were addressed. Casino insiders had an opportunity to voice their concerns. Cautionary conclusions leaned toward non-clinical use of the RGD and not as a technique to diagnose, treat or cure problem gambling.

This rather lengthy study is written in an interesting, informal style. The excellent reference list provides choices for further reading. The prospect of using RGDs in positive ways makes the extensive reading worthwhile. This report is reprinted with the permission of the senior author. It is the only public distribution of this report that will be made.

Keywords: Responsible Gaming Device, RGD, focus group, Reno model, optional vs. mandatory use, privacy and security, personal responsibility, casino perspective, unintended consequences, impact on players