

Title: Integrating Recovery Supports into the Voluntary Self Exclusion

Description:

In 2011 the Massachusetts Expanded Gaming Act allowed for the development of casinos while building in protections for people who gamble. These protections included a Voluntary Self Exclusion program covering all gaming floors across the state. The Expanded Gambling Act also provided for the creation of GameSense Information Centers which were to be staffed by independent GameSense Advisors (GSA's). GSA's receive extensive training in the areas of responsible gambling techniques, problem gambling and are authorized to conduct VSE's on behalf of the MGC. Between 2015 and 2021, the Gamesense Staff members conducted over 1000 VSE's on behalf of the Mass Gaming Commission and began offering remote VSE's in 2021.

Since the inception of the VSE program in Massachusetts, GameSense Advisors have offered referrals to treatment and self-help to those individuals making the decision to self-exclude. In June of 2019 the MACGH introduced Telephone Recovery Support (TRS) as an additional resource for those people who had decided to VSE (in addition to those who had contacted the Council for additional help in stopping or reducing their problematic gambling). TRS is a peer-to-peer support service originally designed for use in drug and alcohol recovery. In the TRS model, a peer in recovery makes weekly calls to "check in" on the recoveree. Recoverees are offered support, encouragement and information about resources that may help them seek or maintain their recovery. At the MACGH, a staff member in long term recovery from problem gambling, conducts up to 10 weeks of TRS calls with a gambling focus. Between the inception of the pilot project on July 1, 2020 and today (October 15, 2022) approximately 50 number of people have engaged with TRS with the goal of reducing or eliminating problem gambling through a combination of support and referrals. MACGH began implementing an evaluation in November of 2021 to measure if TRS is an effective support for those who VSE for problematic gambling and found very positive results.

Objectives

1. Learn about the VSE program in MA and the role of GS Advisors in offering both in person and remote VSEs
2. Learn about TRS as a Recovery Support for Gambling Disorder and how it can be implemented/integrated as part of a VSE program
3. Identify challenges and benefits of offering TRS for problem gambling in the context of VSE.
4. Discuss the outcomes of 3 TRS participants who engaged in the program