

Missouri Gaming Association

The Missouri Gaming Association (formerly the Missouri Riverboat Gaming Association) funds 1-888-BETSOFF, a statewide telephone crisis line and referral service for problem gambling. 1-888-BETSOFF provides immediate crisis response and referral to the statewide network of outpatient counseling clinics and certified compulsive gambling counselors. The telephone line is managed by Life Crisis Services, a provider of quality intervention services with emphasis on caring support for callers and treatment referrals. 1-888-BETSOFF is answered by social workers and counselors who have completed additional training in compulsive gambling counseling.

Missouri Gaming Association (MGA) funding also supports continuing education programs for Life Crisis treatment counselors.

MGA's responsible gaming programs were established in 1995. The Missouri gaming industry developed voluntary programs based on a survey of best practices within the industry and with the counsel of treatment professionals. The programs are funded by the gaming industry and have evolved over the past eleven years to what is described below. Casino senior management is committed to responsible gaming programs. The help-line phone number is included on all collateral materials – player's cards, advertising, brochures, signs, etc.

MGA member firms have specific programs designed to address responsible gaming issues at their facilities. All Missouri casino companies have an employee designated as director of responsible gaming programs.

MGA's Responsible Gaming Program is comprised of three components:

- Project 21, which addresses underage gambling;
- Programs that focus on problem gambling; and
- Alcohol awareness programs to promote responsible consumption of alcohol.

The goals of these components are to create awareness inside the various casinos, involve employees in addressing the issues, create awareness outside the casino and in the communities and provide resources for those who need help. The goals are implemented by a committee of the MGA Board of Directors that is comprised of representatives of each casino company.

There are a variety of tools used by MGA member firms to create awareness of responsible gaming issues. 1-888-BETSOFF is displayed in strategic locations throughout the casinos on posters and in pamphlets produced by the Missouri Lottery. All Missouri casinos display posters communicating key messages in high-traffic customer areas and employee back-of-house areas. These areas include casino entrances, ticket counters, cashier cages, cash access machines, employee break rooms and time clocks. Additionally, responsible gaming messages are communicated on telephone hold messages, hotel television (in-house channel), video wall messaging and promotional of messages.

Each casino provides educational awareness programs designed to formally train employees about compulsive gambling and offer directional assistance to problem gamblers. These programs also allow patrons to exclude themselves voluntarily from marketing materials, check cashing or an outright casino ban.

The employee training programs are designed to help frontline employees recognize the signs that researchers believe indicate someone may have a gambling problem. Gaming employees recognize that they are not social service counselors. Such awareness training is designed to place employees at a comfort level to understand the company's position on the issue of problem gambling and supplies them with valuable information that potentially helps others by providing direction to help from trained professionals.

All casinos provide employees with informational training on responsible gaming subjects. Recognizing the importance of getting employees involved early, responsible gaming is part of orientation for all new hires. The training programs reach a wide range of responsible gaming issues, including how to identify the signs and symptoms of problem gambling, tips on spotting underage customers and ways to prevent intoxication in



the serving of alcohol. Additionally, all Missouri casinos have adopted procedures for dealing with unattended children and underage gambling.

All casinos participate in initiatives to intervene with intoxicated guests. Each property participates in a designated driver program or arranges cab rides as needed. Several companies have extended their server-training program to valet parking employees. As a last step for patrons who refuse intervention, local police authorities are notified. Missouri casinos do not serve complimentary alcoholic drinks on the casino floor. Furthermore, all alcoholic beverages must be purchased with cash, which results in a transaction that assists the server in assessing the sobriety of the guest. Missouri was one of the first gaming jurisdictions to impose a cash charge for alcohol in the gaming area.

MGA encourages patrons to establish their own limits and provides direction to others by developing a set of personal guidelines to determine whether, when and how much to gamble. Personal guidelines should be developed with the following precepts in mind:

- The decision to gamble is a personal choice;
- Gambling is not essential for having a good time;
- What constitutes an acceptable loss needs to be established before starting to gamble; and
- There are times when people should not gamble.

Missouri casinos recognize that dealing with disordered and underage gambling is not only the right thing to do, it is also good business. MGA members have implemented the AGA's Code of Conduct as a commitment to a comprehensive, industry-wide approach to promoting responsible gaming. The code encompasses employee assistance and training, alcohol service, advertising and marketing, public awareness, and support for problem gambling research initiatives.