

RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING STANDARDS FOR INTERNET GAMBLING CONDUCTED BY BCLC

For most people, gambling is an enjoyable form of entertainment. For a small number, however, gambling can become a serious problem. Problem gambling occurs when gambling behavior has negative consequences for individuals, families, and communities.

The Province of British Columbia is committed to ensuring gambling activities are carried out in a socially responsible manner.

As an agent of government, the BC Lottery Corporation (BCLC) conducts and manages commercial gaming in the province, including casinos, commercial bingo halls, community gaming centres, lotteries, and internet gambling via the website PlayNow.com. BCLC is the sole conductor, manager and operator of PlayNow.com.

Authority and Application

Section 28(1)(k) authorizes the General Manager to issue directives establishing policies to address problem gambling.

Section 28(2) requires that BCLC comply with the directives of the general manager that are applicable to BCLC. Compliance will be regularly monitored by GPEB.

Objectives

BCLC will implement and adhere to responsible gambling practices on their internet gambling platform, PlayNow.com, with a focus on player protection and the minimization of gambling harms. Application of these standards helps ensure:

- That internet gambling in British Columbia is delivered and managed by BCLC in a socially responsible manner;
- That BCLC understands its role and responsibilities in relation to the responsible delivery of gambling;
- A safe and informative internet platform for the delivery of gambling products and services;
- Decisions about gambling participation are based on informed choice;
- Player health is promoted, and gambling-related risks are minimized; and,
- Persons negatively affected by gambling have access to timely and effective information and assistance.

GPEB recognizes some standards require implementation time before BCLC will be fully compliant. These standards are identified by an * with a footnoted date when the standard becomes effective, and compliance is required.

1. INFORMED CHOICE

Providing information to players assists them in making informed decisions about the types of gambling they want to engage in and how much risk they are willing to assume. To achieve this, BCLC will assist players in making informed choices by ensuring that:

- 1.1 BCLC's responsible gambling or GameSense information is prominently displayed and easily accessible. Links to this information are located on the main pages on PlayNow.com, including but not limited to the home screen, the play window, the deposit page, the cashier window, and the player account page.
- 1.2 Information on positive play is available and prominently displayed to players, and that information includes:
 - Tips on how to gamble safely and within limits, and
 - Clear instruction on the use of play management tools, such as deposit limits, time limits, and self-assessment.*
- 1.3 Information about how the games work, skill versus chance, randomness, chances of winning, common myths, and house edge is available to players on PlayNow.com.
- 1.4 Information about the signs of problematic gambling is prominently displayed on PlayNow.com, along with information about available help services. Contact information for those seeking support and treatment, including information about the Province's Gambling Support Line, is prominently displayed on key pages (See 2.1).
- 1.5 Players are able to track in real time the amount of time and money spent gambling and can also access up to six months of historical information, such as total wins and losses, games played, and amounts wagered.

2. APPROPRIATE RESPONSE

BCLC must provide timely assistance to players looking for information on games offered on PlayNow.com, and also provide responsible and problem gambling information when needed. To achieve this, BCLC will:

- 2.1 Have in place comprehensive and up to date policies and procedures to guide staff in assisting players who may be experiencing problems with their online gambling.
- 2.2 Ensure that all BCLC staff receive the forms of responsible gambling training relevant to their position. Employees should receive updated training as best practices in the delivery of responsible gambling services evolve.
- 2.3 Ensure that BCLC staff can provide responsible gambling information, such as the odds of winning and luck versus skill and will dispel beliefs contrary to that responsible gambling information when expressed through online chats or calls.
- 2.4 Ensure that BCLC staff are trained to know where to find available resources specific to that individual's community, including support line numbers and other community-based supports, and are aware of other tools, such as voluntary self-exclusion and time-out options.

* Standard 1.2 will be effective March 31, 2023

- 2.5 Have in place a risk assessment and intervention protocol to detect and prevent high-risk play, developed through the use of data analytics or other tools.
- 2.6 Ensure that interventions, in the form of pop-up messages, risk profiles, and/or self-test results, are visible and available to help reduce player risk.*

3. SITE AND GAME DESIGN

The player registration process and the design of games are to be managed in a responsible manner. BCLC will ensure that:

- a. The legal age for gambling must be clearly stated and minors must be prohibited from registering and playing on PlayNow.com.
- b. Processes are in place to verify the age and location of players at the time of registration. Potential PlayNow.com registrants are checked to ensure they are not enrolled in the voluntary self-exclusion program (VSE). Registrants enrolled in the VSE are to be prevented from accessing the site.
- c. All new PlayNow.com games are subject to a formal responsible gambling screening process. Those games that screen as high risk are to be presented to players as high risk through clear and visible messaging.*
- d. Games do not bolster risky behaviour or beliefs, such as implying that skill can impact the outcome of games of chance, encourage players to chase their losses, automatically increase the amount they have decided to gamble, or contain features that allow a player to continue to gamble after the player has indicated to the game that they want to stop.
- e. Games must require a player to commit to each game individually depressing the 'start button' or taking equivalent action. Providing auto-play for online slots is not permitted.*
- f. Players may have only one account. Multiple accounts are to be detected and prevented.
- g. Players are provided with an easy and obvious way to set gambling limits (financial or time-based) upon registration and at any time after registration.
- h. The setting of weekly deposit limits is mandatory for players. Players must take active steps to opt out of establishing loss limits, time limits (daily, weekly, or monthly) and time-outs. These limits can be lowered at any time and will take place immediately.*
- i. Where a gambling limit has been previously established by a player, a request by the player to increase that limit is to be implemented only after a cooling-off period of at least 24 hours.

* Standard 2.6 will be effective March 31, 2024

* Standard 3.3 will be effective March 31, 2023

* Standard 3.5 will be effective March 31, 2024

* Standard 3.8 will be effective March 31, 2024

- j. Player engagement with responsible gambling tools, including those related to setting time or loss limits and time-outs, is encouraged and incentivized.*
- k. Players are notified when set limits described in 3.8 are reached and may opt to continue play after re-establishing limits.
- l. Players have clear and visible access to their account details, including balances, deposits, withdrawals, bonuses, and any limits on play.
- m. The cash value of chips or credits is displayed.
- n. Breaks in play are promoted through the use of hourly session reminders, pop-up messages and other tools.*

4. FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Financial transactions are managed in a responsible manner. BCLC will ensure that:

- a. No credit or loans are extended to players from the site.
- b. Automatic deposits from money sources, such as bank accounts, are prohibited. However, deposits for lottery draw subscriptions are exempt.
- c. Financial transaction policies and practices are easily available to players.

5. VOLUNTARY SELF-EXCLUSION

The voluntary self-exclusion program (VSE) must be well managed, support-oriented, and promoted. To ensure this, BCLC will:

- a. Have in place comprehensive VSE policies and procedures.
- b. Ensure program information is displayed prominently, is communicated to players, and easily accessible on PlayNow.com.
- c. Ensure the VSE registration process is simple and straightforward, and that all necessary information, such as exclusion conditions, confidentiality, help resources, etc., is conveyed to players. Enrollment is available online or through customer services.
- d. Offer a range of exclusion lengths to players.
- e. Make exclusion irrevocable.
- f. Provide information regarding support services to the player at the time of VSE registration. Players are informed that follow up support services will be provided. Players have the opportunity to opt out of these support services.*
- g. Provide time-out options to players who do not wish to register for self-exclusion but want to stop gambling for a specified period. Players shall be provided the option to take a one-day, two-week, one-month, two-month, or three-month break.

* Standard 3.10 will be effective December 31, 2022

* Standard 3.14 will be effective January 31, 2023

* Standard 5.6 will be effective January 31, 2023

- h. Remove self-excluded players from all direct marketing materials for the duration of the self-excluded period.
- i. Require that players wanting to resume play at the expiration of their self-exclusion period participate in an active reinstatement process. Resources that promote safe play will be provided as part of that process, along with proactive support to connect with other requested community services.*
- j. Ensure a mechanism is in place to facilitate the return of the balance of unused funds to a self-excluded individual, when requested by the individual.
- k. Require that players who voluntarily exclude themselves from BCLC's online platform will also be prohibited from participating in land-based gambling offered by BCLC at BC gaming facilities.*

Issued by:

Sam MacLeod, General Manager
December 2022

* Standard 5.9 will be effective January 31, 2023

* Standard 5.11 will be effective March 31, 2024