Players' Awareness of and Engagement with GameSense in Massachusetts Casinos

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Authorship and acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

What was the purpose of this evaluation of GameSense?

The study assessed awareness, perceptions, and engagement with the GameSense program in Massachusetts from the players' perspective. The focus was on players' 1) perceptions of the GameSense program (including its purpose and target audience), 2) engagement with GameSense via visits to GameSense Information Centers (GSICs), and 3) interactions with GameSense Advisors (GSAs). This executive summary provides a comprehensive overview of the key findings and implications of the study.

The current report presents the results of the first of four evaluations conducted by the current research team on awareness, perceptions, and engagement with GameSense. Subsequent reports focus on casino employees and GSAs, and the role they play in facilitating responsible gambling (RG) among players.

How were data collected and analyzed?

Recruitment. A sample of 1109 regular patrons (i.e., people who visited one of the three casinos at least three times in the last three months and spent at least $100) was recruited through email invitations sent to regular casino patrons enrolled in the rewards program. In contrast to previous evaluations of GameSense, we only recruited regular patrons because they more accurately represent patrons who are actively involved in the gambling environment and so have a higher likelihood of encountering RG initiatives. The survey was conducted from October 19 to December 2, 2022.

Data analysis. The study included two stages of analysis to examine awareness, perceptions, and engagement with the GameSense program. In the first stage, we describe the sample characteristics, including demographic information and frequency of visits to the casino. In the second stage, we evaluated the knowledge and uptake of GameSense among respondents. This included assessing awareness of GameSense, players' perceptions of the program (such as perceived purpose and target audience), and engagement with GameSense by way of visits to GSICs, reasons for visiting or not visiting, interactions with GSAs, and perceived impact of those interactions. Latent class analyses (LCAs) were conducted to identify distinct subgroups and explore their associations with disordered gambling symptoms, positive play, and frequency of visits. We also collected data that assessed disordered gambling symptomatology and positive play. We assessed the these as possible correlates of awareness, perceptions, and engagement with GameSense.

What did we find?

Awareness and Perceived Purpose of GameSense. Most respondents (73.1%; $n = 811$) were aware of GameSense, with a clear majority of these respondents reporting that GameSense

helps educate players about RG (84.2%; n = 683), provides RG tools (70.4%; n = 571), and offers support for gambling-related problems (70.4%; n = 571). A lower percentage of respondents were aware of GameSense's role in helping players understand how games work (19.9%; n = 161) and dispelling gambling-related myths (25.8%; n = 209).

Perceived Target Audience for GameSense. Most respondents (71.7%; n = 728) believed GameSense was created for people who have trouble controlling their gambling. Just over half of the respondents (53.8%; n = 529) correctly considered GameSense to be relevant to all people who gamble.

Engagement with GameSense Information Centers (GSICs). A small percentage of respondents reported visiting a GSIC (17.6%; n = 195), with the most common reasons being stumbling upon it (55.5%; n = 106) or out of curiosity (47.1%; n = 90). Reasons for not visiting included already having knowledge about how games work (50.9%; n = 398), familiarity with PlayMyWay (50.5%; n = 395), and not being explicitly asked to visit (58.4%; n = 457). Importantly, a large proportion of respondents who did not visit expressed interest in visiting a GSIC to learn more about RG (48.2%; n = 387), PlayMyWay (42.7%; n = 340), and supports for problem gaming (40.7%; n = 324).

Through the LCA, we identified two distinct groups of patrons who visited a GSIC. The first group (N = 67) visited primarily because they were curious or for swag. Consequently, we labeled this group "Curiosity and Swag Inspired". Those in Group 2 (N = 124), the larger of the two groups, visited to get an array of information (about responsible gambling and problematic gambling). Consequently, we labeled this group "Information Seekers". Information Seekers tended to be older than those who were Curiosity and Swag Inspired.

A second LCA was conducted on those who had not visited a GSIC. This analysis identified three distinct groups of patrons. Those in Group 1 (N = 248) did not visit because they were not explicitly invited to do so. We labeled these patrons "Invitation-Responsive". Those in Groups 2 (N = 132) and 3 (N = 402) felt that they already understood all that GameSense had to offer. What distinguished those in Group 2 from those in Group 3 was that those in Group 2 also held negative view of GameSense and GSA's ability to help players with their gambling. Additionally, over 50% of those in Group 2 do not agree with the presence of GameSense at the casino. Consequently, we labeled those in Group 2 "Self-Assured Non-Believers" and those in Group 3 "Self-Assured". Importantly, the Self-Assured Non-Believers group was the smallest of the three groups, and there was near 0% endorsement of the idea that GameSense and GSAs don't help players among the Invitation-Responsive and Self-Assured respondents. Self-Assured respondents tended to score higher in all aspects of positive play (Gambling Literary, Personal Responsibility, Honesty and Control, And Pre-Commitment) and lower in disordered gambling symptoms compared to either Invitation-Responsive or Self-Assured Non-Believers. This result suggests that those who in the Self-Assured group may, in fact, both know about RG and engage in it, and thus, may have less need for GameSense than those in the other groups. There were no between group differences in the distribution of age or gender.

Of importance for the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) and GSAs for advancing engagement with GameSense will be differentiating between people who express that

they do not need GameSense because they are already positive players (as may be the case among the Self-Assured) and those who express a similar sentiment erroneously (as may be the case among the Self-Assured Non-Believers). In fact, the Self-Assured Non-Believers may be at the greatest risk for gambling-related problems yet may be the most reticent to engage with GameSense.

Interactions with GameSense Advisors (GSAs) and Perceived Impact of Interactions. Among respondents who had interacted with a GSA (16.3%; *n* = 181), most reported having simple interactions (i.e., a short, communication with a GSA about issues unrelated to gaming; 78.5%; *n* = 142), while fewer reported demonstrations (i.e., a longer, communication from a GSA about how a game, RG tool, or concept works; 34.3%; *n* = 62) or exchanges (i.e., a two-way communication with a GSA about RG or problem gaming; 28.7%; *n* = 52). Notably, respondents who had demonstrations or exchanges felt more informed about RG compared to those who had only simple interactions.

Interaction with GameSense, Disordered Gambling Symptomatology and Positive Play. Respondents who had engaged with GameSense (through a visit to a GSICs or interaction with a GSA) had higher scores on the disordered gambling symptomatology scale (Problem Gambling Severity Index [PGSI]) and visited a casino in Massachusetts more frequently compared to those who had no interaction. Respondents who interacted with GameSense tended to accept less personal responsibility for their gambling and were less likely to engage in precommitment (i.e., set a limit on the amount of money they are willing to lose prior to initiating a gambling session) than those who had not interacted with GameSense. It is possible that players who engage with GameSense are doing so to help them gamble more responsibly or to seek assistance with a gambling problem.

What are some take home messages?

1. Although there is a high level of awareness about GameSense, there is still room for improvement and there is a need for increased education about the comprehensive functions of GameSense.

2. There is a potential gap in understanding the inclusive nature of GameSense and the importance of its services for all individuals engaged in gambling activities. Efforts should be made to address this misperception and ensure that the program reaches its intended target audience effectively.

3. There is potential for GSICs to serve as valuable educational and supportive resources for individuals engaged in gambling activities.

4. There is evidence that GSAs provide a valuable service, particularly when they engage directly with patrons one-on-one. Relative to respondents reporting only simple interactions or demonstrations, those who reported exchanges with GSAs

reported enhanced knowledge about RG and were more likely to encourage others to speak with a GSA.

5. The majority of respondents, whether they had already engaged with GameSense or had yet to do so, expressed a positive view of the program. Only a small proportion (12%) of those who had yet to engage with GameSense believed it was not a useful program. Of note, those who had engaged with GameSense visited a casino in Massachusetts more frequently than those who had not yet engaged with GameSense. This potentially suggests that greater exposure (passive, or active by of promotions) to GameSense increases engagement.

6. Respondents who engaged with GameSense had greater symptoms of disordered gambling than those who did not. This suggests that individuals seeking interactions with GameSense may already be experiencing some gambling-related problems and thus could benefit from the program's support services. Additionally, those who engaged with GameSense tended to score lower on the Personal Responsibility and precommitment subscales, suggesting a potential need for further intervention and education in these areas.

7. That respondents who interacted with GameSense tended to score lower on accepting personal responsibility for their gambling and engagement in precommitment behaviors (i.e., setting a money limit prior to initiating a gambling session) than those who had not interacted with GameSense may suggest that those who are most in need of positive play guidance are getting it.

What do we recommend?

1. *Increase awareness about the benefits of GameSense*. Regular patrons are aware of GameSense but are less familiar with the range of tools available, and in many cases unaware of how the program may benefit them. A campaign that informs regular, low- and moderate-risk players about the benefits of the program may correct misunderstandings about the relevance of the program for them.

2. *Attract patrons through tailored RG messaging.* We recommend MGC embrace player segmentation to attract patrons. Older respondents were more likely to engage with GameSense for RG purposes. Thus, older people may be more receptive to RG-related messages about GameSense. To tap into the younger demographic, perhaps heightening curiosity about GameSense (e.g., campaigns that ask "What is GameSense") or offer swag that will be attractive to a younger demographic. Prior research has already shown the benefits of player segmentation.

3. *Normalize the use of GameSense.* By normalizing the use of GameSense tools and seamlessly integrating them into the gambling environment, players' attitudes can be positively influenced, dispelling the notion that GameSense is solely for those with

gambling problems. This approach has been shown to increase both players' adoption of GameSense and their overall usage of its resources. By leveraging GameSense to improve gambling literacy, the MGC can create a more informed and empowered player base, fostering a positive and responsible gambling culture.

4. ***Enhance the role and perceptions of GSAs.*** GSAs play a critical role in disseminating information about the program to patrons. The more they are able to interact with players, the greater their potential impact. Needed is a campaign that increases understanding that GameSense is for all players (not only for individuals with gambling problems). Doing so will help all players feel comfortable seeking help, regardless of their specific needs. This approach should not only help destigmatize the role of GSAs but also highlights their broader function in providing information, support, and resources to enhance the overall gaming experience for everyone.

5. **Add a designated, GameSense branded, "Play Break" Sitting Area Inside the GSIC**. Given the recognized importance of play breaks in RG strategies and the fact that a fifth of respondents associated GSICs with taking breaks, we suggest introducing dedicated "Play Break" areas within GSICs. Such an area should be GameSense branded. This initiative would enable GSAs to engage players in informative interactions while promoting RG practices, creating a supportive environment that caters to player well-being.

6. ***More research is required***. Additional research is required to better understand the short and long-term effects of interacting with GameSense on players' beliefs and behaviors. Specifically, a longitudinal study where players who do and players who do not engage with GameSense are assessed (by way of survey and player account data) both before and after engagement with GameSense.

What have we learned?

The study findings provide valuable insights into the awareness, perceptions, and engagement with the GameSense program in Massachusetts. There is a high level of GameSense awareness among regular patrons; however, efforts are needed to increase understanding of the program's comprehensive purpose and target audience. Patron interactions with GSAs and GSICs demonstrated their potential to enhance knowledge about RG and promote positive play. However, further strategies should be implemented to reach a broader audience and address specific areas of concern related to disordered gambling and personal responsibility. By continuing to improve and promote GameSense, Massachusetts can effectively support RG behaviors and mitigate the potential harms associated with excessive gambling.

1. Introduction

Although most people gamble in a responsible manner (i.e., they do not gamble excessively; Wood et al., 2017), a small but significant proportion of players will spend more time and money gambling than they can afford, resulting in interpersonal, financial, and physical and mental health problems (Blaszczynski et al., 2004; Browne & Rockloff, 2018). Consequently, researchers, policy makers, and the gambling industry have supported the creation and implementation of educational materials and tools that minimize gambling-related harms and facilitate Responsible Gambling (RG; see Tabri et al., 2021). For example, when people visit a gaming venue, they may see RG educational materials that explain how games work (e.g., Wohl et al., 2010), pop-up messages when playing Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) that inform them about the odds of winning or whether they have reached a pre-determined limit on the amount of time or money they spent gambling (see Auer et al., 2014; Gainsbury et al., 2018b; Stewart & Wohl, 2013; Tabri, Hollingshead, & Wohl, 2019), contact information for treatment services and programs should they believe their play is becoming (or has become) problematic (Blaszczynski et al., 2011; Dickson-Gillespie et al., 2008; Hing, 2004; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010), and means to self-exclude from gambling should they think they need to abstain from play (Dickson-Gillespie et al., 2008; Hing, 2004; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010). These initiatives are typically provided to players via organized and branded RG programming offered by the gambling industry.

In the current research, we assessed players' awareness and perceptions of, and engagement with, the GameSense RG program offered in casinos in Massachusetts. GameSense is a comprehensive and widely used RG program that was created by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC) to educate players about how gambling games work (e.g., the odds

of winning) and promote RG-related beliefs (e.g., accurate understanding about the nature of gambling) and behaviors (e.g., pre-commitment to a money and time limit on gambling). Additionally, GameSense provides information about problem gambling and resources for players who think they may have a gambling problem (e.g., explain and help patrons enroll in a voluntary self-exclusion program). Ultimately, the aim of programs like GameSense is to help *all* players make informed decisions regarding their play and minimize the harms associated with gambling (see Blaszczynski et al., 2011). However, an assessment of the possible effect GameSense has on harm reduction was beyond the scope of the current assessment.

In most casinos that offer the GameSense program, GameSense Advisors (GSAs) provide information and support to individuals who visit on-site resource areas called GameSense Information Centers (GSICs). The primary role of GSAs is to engage with players and provide them with educational resources and tools to help them make informed decisions about their gambling activities. GSAs offer information about the risks associated with gambling and encourage players to set limits on their time and money spent gambling. Unfortunately, only a small proportion (1-10%) of players engage with RG resources that are available to them (see Nelson et al., 2008; Wohl et al., 2018). Programs such as GameSense can only be effective if players are aware of their existence, have accurate perceptions about the purpose of the program, and engage with the resources they offer. To this end, we surveyed regular players at the three casinos in MA. We did so to get a better understanding of the differences between those who and those who are not aware of GS, and between those who have engaged with GS and those who have not.

1.1 Responsible Gambling and Responsible Gambling Programing

Although players hold the ultimate responsibility to gamble within their means, the Reno Model of Responsible Gambling (see Blaszczynski et al., 2004) states that all stakeholders in gambling, including governments, gambling providers, health services, and community and consumer groups share the responsibility to minimize gambling-related harms. The provider, however, has a unique legal and moral responsibility for the harms arising from gambling (Hing, 2010), and thus should offer an environment that prevents excessive and potentially harmful consumption wherever possible (Dickerson, 2003). Often lost in the discourse about RG is that it is not merely about preventing excessive or disordered gambling and providing resources should gambling become problematic; RG also encompasses the promotion of beliefs and behaviors in all players that keep gambling from becoming problematic (i.e., positive play; Hing et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2017; Wood & Griffiths, 2015).

With the Reno Model as a guide, most stakeholders have accepted a duty of care for players. To this end, in addition to providing resources about problem gambling to those who have developed a gambling problem (e.g., voluntary self-exclusion programs; Lubman et al., 2015; Matheson et al., 2019), RG policies and programs have been developed to minimize gambling-related harms for all players (Wohl et al., 2014). Consequently, among other things, materials have been developed that help educate players about the odds of winning (Blaszczynski et al., 2014; Wohl et al., 2010), and tools have been created and provided to players that help them set a limit on the amount of money and/or time they spend gambling (Auer & Griffiths, 2013; Kim et al., 2014; Ladouceur et al., 2012; Stewart & Wohl, 2013) and/or provide players with an alert should their play be determined to be risky or problematic (typically by way of a risk algorithm; Wood & Wohl, 2015).

Importantly, empirical research from academic laboratories has shown that these RG initiatives can help prevent problematic forms of gambling (Blaszczynski et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Wohl & Stewart, 2012). Additionally, research using player-account data has shown that those who use RG tools report beliefs (e.g., being honest about their gambling with others) and engage in behaviors (e.g., limit setting and adherence) that are known to reduce the risk of developing gambling-related problems to a greater extent than those who do not use the tools (e.g., Auer & Griffiths, 2013; Wohl et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2017; however for contrary results see Wohl et al., in press). The net result has been a proliferation of organized and branded RG programming by gambling operators as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy (see Louderback et al., 2021; Wohl et al., 2014). For instance, in 2009, the BCLC developed a universal prevention program called GameSense to provide educational tools to players that are designed to facilitate safer gambling attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors (Louderback et al., 2022b; Smith, 2014).

Despite the growing popularity of GameSense within the gambling industry, limited research has been conducted on players' awareness and perceptions of the program or its RG utility. Research that has been conducted shows that people who have engaged with the GameSense program (relative to those who have not done so) reported greater gambling knowledge, higher awareness of various gambling fallacies, and fewer immediate and long-term intentions to continue gambling (Zhou et al., 2019). However, as shown by Gray and colleagues (2020), use of the GameSense program is limited (i.e., there was very little direct engagement between players and GSAs). For instance, one study found that GSAs directly connected with only 0.67% of the daily patrons (see also Louderback et al., 2022b).

The alarmingly low use of GameSense mirrors research on the uptake of RG tools and demonstrates operators have been challenged to spark interest in RG programs (see Nelson et al., 2008; Schottler Consulting, 2009). Indeed, only 1% - 10% of players use the RG tools available to them (Nelson et al., 2008). Specifically, Schottler Consulting (2009) found that only 2% of Australian loyalty program members signed up to use RG tools. Similarly, Nelson and colleagues (2008) found that, throughout the 18-month study period, only 1% of players used the self-limit feature on *BWin*—an Internet sports betting site. Yet, little is known about why most players do not engage in RG programming, resulting in a call for research to better understand players' awareness of, and attitudes toward, RG programming (see Wohl, 2018)

1.2 Predicting Awareness and Engagement with GameSense: Disordered Gambling Symptomatology and Positive Play

Even though RG programming is created for the full spectrum of players (i.e., players who gamble solely at recreational levels to those who have developed a gambling disorder; Blaszczynski et al., 2004; Dickson-Gillespie et al., 2008), those who already gamble responsibly may not perceive a need to engage with RG (see Bagot et al., 2021; Delfabbro et al., 2020b; Wood et al., 2017). This is because people only tend to engage with RG programs when they believe that it will help control excessive gambling (see Gainsbury et al., 2020) and people tend to believe RG programs and tools are only relevant to players with gambling problems (e.g., Bagot et al., 2021; Gainsbury et al., 2020; Gray et al., 2020; Louderback et al., 2022a; Louderback et al., 2022b; Marko et al., 2022). Indeed, Bagot and colleagues (2021) found that players were more likely to implement RG strategies when their gambling became more severe and problematic. Similarly, Louderback and colleagues (2022b) found a positive correlation between players' engagement with GameSense and the frequency of their gambling. Given

gambling frequency is positively correlated with disordered gambling symptomatology (see LaPlante et al., 2011; Welte et al., 2004), awareness of, and engagement, with RG programs like GameSense may be a function of the extent to which a player has elevated symptoms of a gambling disorder.

In contrast, players who endorse beliefs and exhibit behaviors that allow them to maintain a fun, but safe level of gambling (i.e., positive play) may believe that RG programing is not directed toward their play experience. Positive players tend to believe it is important to be knowledgeable about the nature of gambling games (e.g., the odds of winning), take personal responsibility for their play, are honest about how much they gamble and in control of their gambling behavior, and set a limit on the amount of money and time they spend gambling (Delfabbro et al., 2020b; Wood et al., 2017). Indeed, Louderback and colleagues (2022b) found no relation between GameSense awareness and positive play beliefs or behavior outcomes. It is possible that individuals who engage in positive play already possess a high level of knowledge and understanding regarding responsible gambling practices. These individuals may have developed responsible gambling strategies on their own, without relying on external resources or programs. Consequently, they may perceive less need for additional support or may not be actively seeking out responsible gambling programs like GameSense. In this light, a strong correlation between positive play beliefs or behaviours and awareness of GS or use of GS tools shouldn't be expected. In the current research, we nevertheless assessed the relations between positive play and awareness and perceptions of GameSense, as well as engagement with the program.

2. Overview of Current Research

The purpose of the current study was to assess awareness of the GameSense RG program among regular patrons of the three casinos in Massachusetts. We also assessed perceptions of the program and the RG materials and tools provided that aim to reduce gambling-related harms. Importantly, when assessing awareness of and engagement with a RG program like GameSense, in contrast to previous assessments of GameSense (e.g., Gray et al., 2020; Louderback et al., 2022a; Louderback et al., 2022b), we contend it is crucial to recruit regular patrons.This approach more accurately represents patrons who are actively involved in the gambling environment and have a higher likelihood of encountering RG initiatives. Regular patrons are more likely to have repeated exposure to the establishment's resources and RG messaging, providing them with the opportunity to become familiar with programs like GameSense. Their deeper understanding of the potential risks associated with gambling and higher motivation to engage with RG programs make them an ideal population to assess. By targeting regular patrons in our recruitment, we can gain insights that are more applicable to individuals who are actively involved in the gambling environment and enhance the validity and relevance of our findings.

In contrast, assessing infrequent patrons, including those who may have only visited the casino a single time, when measuring awareness and engagement with GameSense may present challenges. Infrequent patrons may have limited exposure to the RG initiatives offered by the establishment, leading to a lack of awareness regarding programs like GameSense. Their limited familiarity with the casino's environment and available resources may result in minimal or non-existent engagement with RG interventions. Additionally, self-reported measures of awareness and engagement may be unreliable or inflated among infrequent patrons due to their limited exposure to the programs in question. Furthermore, infrequent patrons may differ significantly

from regular patrons in terms of their gambling habits, motivations, and attitudes, potentially

leading to different perceptions of RG initiatives. Including infrequent patrons alongside regular

patrons in the assessment of awareness and engagement may confound the results and obscure

meaningful associations. Therefore, focusing on regular patrons provides a more comprehensive

and accurate understanding of the impact and effectiveness of RG programs like GameSense.

The ultimate goal of the current research was to better understand factors that influence the

perceived RG utility of GameSense and players' engagement with the program.

As background, when Massachusetts allowed gambling expansion across the state, it

required all newly licensed gaming operators to allocate complimentary on-site space for an

independent counselling service that addresses substance abuse, compulsive gambling, and

mental health concerns. To fulfil this legal requirement, MGC chose the GameSense brand. One

notable characteristic of the GameSense program implemented in Massachusetts casinos is its

autonomy. Specifically, the hiring and supervision of GSAs are conducted by the Massachusetts

Council on Gaming and Health (MACGH)—a state-wide independent non-profit organization

that helps safeguard public health by addressing and minimizing the adverse effects of gambling

on individuals and communities. The goal of the current assessment of the GameSense program

in Massachusetts was to better understand why (or why not) players use the program. To this

end, we examined whether awareness of, and engagement with, GameSense at the three casinos

in Massachusetts is related to players' endorsement of beliefs and engagement in behaviors that

help them to gamble in a safe and responsible manner (i.e., positive play; Wood & Griffiths,

2015; Wood et al., 2017). This is the first assessment of a larger evaluation of perceptions of and

engagement with GameSense. Subsequent reports will focus on casino employees and GSAs,

and the role they play in facilitating RG among players. The current report should not be taken as implying that players are solely responsible for avoiding gambling-related harms.

The current research was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board – B (certificate #117682).

3. Methods & Results

3.1 Method and Results Structure

The following section outlines the method and results structure used in this report. The analysis proceeded in two main stages: Sample Characteristics and GameSense Evaluation. In the first stage, we present descriptive information about the sample. Descriptive information included information about the age and gender composition of the sample as well as factors such as disordered gambling symptomatology, positive play beliefs and behaviors as well as the frequency with which respondents report visiting casinos in Massachusetts.

In the second stage, we directly evaluated knowledge about and uptake of GameSense. To this end, we assessed the proportion of players who were aware of GameSense and whether those who were aware versus not aware differ on the measured sample characteristics. Among those who reported being aware of GameSense, we examined the perceived purpose of the program. Thereafter, we assessed the perceived target audience for GameSense among all respondents (i.e., regardless of awareness). Importantly, before doing so, all participants were given a brief description of the program. Lastly, we assessed engagement with GameSense. We did so both in terms of visits to a GSIC and interactions with a GSA. Specifically, we examined the proportion of players who reported visiting a GSIC and their reasons for doing so (or their reason for not visiting a GSIC), the type of interactions respondents had with a GSA, and whether there were any differences between those who had interacted with GameSense and those

who had not in terms of the sample characteristics. Additionally, we report the results of two latent class analyses (LCAs): one that assessed reasons for visiting and the other that assessed reasons for not visiting.

A LCA is a statistical technique used to identify groups (called 'classes') within a sample based on observed (measured) variables. LCA was employed for several reasons. Firstly, it allows for the identification of distinct subgroups within a population, offering a more nuanced understanding. For example, we tested whether the reasons why people visited a GSIC can be meaningfully clustered or grouped together. It also allows us to examine whether sample characteristics differed between any groups, thus providing insights into distinct patterns and associations. Specifically, we assessed whether observed groups have predictive utility in terms disordered gambling symptomatology, positive play, and/or frequency of visits. This approach allowed for a systematic and informative examination of the associations of interest in the context of the study. A detailed description of model selection is provided in Appendix A.

3.2 Recruitment

To recruit respondents, an email was sent to regular patrons (i.e., those who had visited the casino at least three times in the prior three months and had spent at least $100 according to their player account data; see Wohl et al., 2018) who had enrolled in the rewards program at one of the three casinos in Massachusetts. The email was sent via each casino's rewards program listserv. Potential respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to get their "thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors" and that input was welcome even if the player had never heard about GameSense. They were offered a US$10 Amazon.com gift card for participating in the survey. A link to the survey was provided in the body of the email, and those who accessed the link were directed to an online

consent form that provided further detail about the purpose of the study, compensation for

participation, data security, and their right to withdraw. Those who consented to participate were

directed to the online survey (see Appendix B for the survey).

Based in an a priori power analyses, with point estimates based on prior research by our

team that assessed awareness of Ontario Lottery and Gaming's PlaySmart RG program, we

aimed to recruit at least 800 patrons.

The study was launched on October 19, 2022 and closed on December 2, 2022.

3.3 Sample Characteristics

A total of 1239 regular casino patrons were recruited via the various loyalty program

email distribution lists. Of these, 47 respondents did not consent to the study, 58 did not pass

eligibility criteria (i.e., they were either less than 21 years of age or had not visited or gambled at

any of the casinos in the past three months), and two respondents consented to participate but did

not provide responses to the survey questions. Additionally, 24 responses were identified as

duplicates and consequently removed (see Footnote 1). Thus, our analyses are based on a sample

of 1109 individuals (M_{age} = 54.2, SD = 13.20), which is a sample size that exceeded the

minimum sample required as determined by our power analysis. More details on the sample are

provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	n	*%*
Age		
21-24	8	0.7%
25-34	48	4.3
35-44	144	13.0
45-54	187	16.9
55-64	231	20.8
65+	186	23.1
Did not indicate	305	27.5
Gender		
Man	371	33.5%
Woman	469	42.3
Other	4	0.3
Did not indicate	265	23.9

3.4 Possible correlates of awareness and engagement with GameSense

The following variables were included to assess whether they are associated with awareness, perceptions of GameSense, and engagement with the program (i.e., why people engaged with GameSense or not).

3.4.1. ***Disordered Gambling Symptomology.*** Disordered gambling symptomology was assessed using the nine-item Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI; see Ferris & Wynne, 2001). The PGSI assesses problem gambling behaviors (e.g., "How often have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?") as well as the consequences of problem gambling (e.g., "How often has your gaming caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?"). Response options were anchored at 0 *(never)* to 3 *(always)*. Respondents' total PGSI scores were the sum of the nine items. Degrees of risk have been established based on scores on the PGSI, with those scoring 0 considered to be non-problematic gamblers, those scoring 1 or 2 considered to be "low

risk", those scoring 3 to 7 considered to be "moderate risk", and those scoring more than 7 as "problem gamblers".

A total of 224 patrons (20.2%) were categorized as a non-problem gambler, 226 (20.4%) as low-risk, 248 (22.4% as a moderate-risk, and 201 (18.1%) as a problem gambler. A risk category could not be calculated for 210 patrons (18.9%) due to missing data. Additionally, as noted in Table 3, mean levels of disordered gambling symptomatology ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 5.65$) places the sample as a whole in the middle of the "moderate risk" category. Given that we recruited only regular gamblers, this level of disordered gambling symptomatology is not unexpected. Increased frequency of gambling is known to be strongly associated with gambling-related problems (Young et al., 2022).

3.4.2 Positive Play. We used the Positive Play Scale (Wood et al., 2017) to assess the extent to which respondents were aware of gambling myths and fallacies (i.e., Gambling Literacy), assumed personal responsibility for their play behavior, were honest with family members and in control of their gambling, and set limits on their play. The Gambling Literacy subscale included three items ($\alpha = .63$; e.g., "Gambling is not a good way to make money").The Personal Responsibility subscale included four items ($\alpha = .89$) (e.g., "I should be able to walk away from gambling at any time").These belief subscales were anchored at 1 *(strongly disagree)* and 7 *(strongly agree).* The third subscale was comprised of three items ($\alpha = .88$) that measured the extent to which the participant was in control of and honest about their gambling (e.g., "In the last month I felt in control of my gambling behavior"). The final subscale consisted of four items ($\alpha = .91$) designed to measure the player's pre-commitment (e.g., "I considered the amount of time I was willing to spend before I gambled"). Response options for the behavior subscales were anchored at 1 *(never)* and 7 *(always).*

Mean scores were calculated for each subscale (and reported in Table 3), with higher scores representing higher endorsement of positive play beliefs and behaviors. Scores on all subscales were relatively similar, with means ranging from 5.44 (Honesty and Control) to 6.13 (Personal Responsibility) indicating high levels of both positive play beliefs and behavior. Yet, there is also opportunity for improvement.

3.4.3. Frequency of casino gambling in Massachusetts. Respondents were first asked how many times they visited one of the casinos in Massachusetts in the past three months. Responses were anchored at 1 *(0 times)* and 6 *(5 or more times).* Most (72.1%) reported visiting five or more times. Interestingly, despite participation being restricted (based on player account data) to those who had visited at least three times in the last three months, 2.7% reported visiting only once and 7.1% reported visiting only twice in the past 3 months. Respondents were then asked what proportion of their overall gambling took place in the Massachusetts casino through which they were contacted (in 25% increments). Of the 85.5% of respondents responding to this question, 34.4% indicated 100%, and 16.2% indicated 25% or less. Table 2 provides data on the estimated proportion of their play at their designated Massachusetts casino per visit involves slot machines, table games, video table games, and lottery.

Table 2

Proportion of Play on Different Games per Visit

In the last 3 months, when you visited this casino, how often did you play:	Never (0%)	Rarely (1-33%)	Sometimes (34-66%)	Often (67-99%)	Always (100%)
Slot machines	1.9%	3.6%	5.7%	16.0%	72.8%
Table games	66.1	13.9	6.2	4.0	9.8
Video table games	74.7	12.7	4.8	2.9	4.7
Lottery	72.6	16.1	6.6	2.8	1.8

Note. Ns range from 887 to 962. Percentages based on number responding to item.

3.4.4 Associations between measured variables and sample characteristics. As observed in previous work (see Wood et al., 2017), disordered gambling symptomatology was negatively associated with all positive play subscales. The negative association with symptoms of disordered gambling was particularly strong for Honesty and Control as well as Pre-Commitment. Additionally, there was a small but positive association between disordered gambling symptomatology and frequency of visiting a casino in Massachusetts.[1] Perhaps unsurprisingly then, there was a small negative association between visit frequency and both Honesty and Control and Pre-Commitment. Personal Responsibility and Gambling Literacy were not associated with visit frequency but were moderately negatively associated with disordered gambling symptomatology.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between the Sample Characteristics Variables

	M	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Disordered Gambling Symptomatology	4.61	5.65	-	-	-	-	-
2. Personal Responsibility	6.13	1.12	-.34**	-	-	-	-
3. Gambling Literacy	5.65	1.19	-.27**	.36**	-	-	-
4. Honesty and Control	5.44	1.63	-.62**	.33**	.18**	-	-
5. Pre-Commitment	5.76	1.46	-.67**	.41**	.21**	.75**	-
6. Frequency of visits to the casino	5.40	1.09	.10**	.02	-.02	-.10**	-.09**

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

4. Assessment of GameSense

In this section, we report the extent to which respondents reported awareness of GameSense and the perceived purpose of GameSense (among those who were aware). After

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[1] Because the frequency of visits was highly negatively skewed, with 72.1% selecting the option '5 or more times', it is not surprising that the correlations of this variable with others are small in magnitude. Given the highly skewed nature of this variable, care should be taken in interpreting these correlations.

describing GameSense to all players, they were then asked to report who they think the target

audience is for GameSense. Lastly, we assessed engagement with GameSense in terms of visits

to a GSIC and interactions with a GSA.

4.1. GameSense Awareness

To assess awareness of GameSense, respondents were first asked whether they had heard

about the program. The 811 (73.1%) who indicated they heard of GameSense were then asked

how they heard about it. The nine response options (plus an "other" category) are listed in Table

4, along with the percent who endorsed each option. Most of those who indicated "other"

indicated that they first became aware of GameSense through ads or promotional material at a

casino or on a gaming machine.

Table 4

Where Respondents Heard About GameSense

Sources:	% agreement
Casino staff	32.3
Print advertisements	30.3
A GameSense Advisor	26.1
Social Media	16.5
Other players	10.9
Friends	10.2
MassGaming.com	9.9
TV advertisements	4.1
Radio advertisements	3.6
Other	19.6

Note. $N = 811$. Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could list more than one reasons.

Next, we assessed whether those who were aware of GameSense differed from those who

were not aware of GameSense on sample characteristics (see Table 5). Those who were aware of

GameSense scored no differently on our measure of disordered gambling symptomatology (PGSI) than those who were not aware of it, p = .57, d = .04. Likewise, there were no differences in terms of positive play beliefs and behaviors as a function of whether respondents were aware of GameSense, ps > .14, ds < .12. However, those who were aware of GameSense tended to visit a casino in Massachusetts with more frequency than those who were not aware of GameSense, p = .003, d = .20.

Table 5

Comparison of Patrons Who Were and Were Not Aware of GameSense

Measure	Aware of GameSense			Not aware of GameSense						
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	t	df	p	d
Disordered gambling symptomatology	676	4.73	5.71	223	4.48	5.59	.58	897	.565	.04
Personal Responsibility	691	6.15	1.09	230	6.06	1.18	1.07	919	.283	.08
Gambling Literacy	692	5.68	1.19	231	5.55	1.17	1.48	921	.140	.11
Honesty and Control	692	5.41	1.65	230	5.54	1.54	-1.15	920	.253	-.08
Pre-Commitment	686	5.75	1.46	230	5.79	1.44	-.33	914	.739	-.03
Frequency of visits to the casino	811	5.46	1.03	298	5.23	1.24	3.00	1107	.003*	.20

Note. * p < .05. Sample sizes vary due to missing data/non-responses.

4.1.1 Perceived purpose of GameSense. Respondents who indicated awareness of GameSense were provided eight items that assessed the perceived purpose of GameSense (see Table 6). These items included six correct purposes and one incorrect purpose: "It offers a place where players can bet on sports". Also included was an item that asked whether "It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor". Although initially included as an incorrect purpose, following data collection we learned that players may be using GSICs to take a break from the gaming floor (a known RG strategy). Because it was not known whether players were using it in such a manner, we ultimately coded this item as neither correct nor incorrect.

Results showed that most respondents correctly checked that GameSense helped educate players about RG (84.2%), provided RG tools (i.e., PlayMyWay; 70.4%), and offered supports for those who develop gambling related problems (70.4%), but a relatively low proportion of respondents (19.9%) knew that GameSense helps players understand how games work or helps dispel gambling-related myths (25.8%). Additionally, slightly less than half of all respondents were aware that GameSense helped facilitate voluntary self-exclusion (46.0%).

Table 6

Purposes of GameSense

Purposes:	% agreement
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit)	84.2
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay – a budgeting tool where you track your play and receive notifications as you get closer to the budget	70.4
It offers a place where players can find where to get support if they believe their gaming has become problematic	70.4
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts	46.0
It's a program that helps dispel gaming-related myths	25.8
It's a program that teaches players how games work	19.9
It offers a place where players can bet on sports*	6.0
It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge)**	16.3

Note. * indicates incorrect purpose. ** not scored as correct or incorrect. $N = 811$.

4.2 Perceived target audience for GameSense

All respondents read the following brief description of the GameSense program:

GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy. GameSense Advisors work

at a GameSense Info Center located at MGM Springfield/Encore Boston

Harbor/Plainridge Park Casino. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the

areas of responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for

help. Many GameSense Advisors come to the position with professional gaming

experience which is useful in understanding patrons' needs.

They were then asked to respond to five items that assessed the perceived target audience for

GameSense. These items, together with their means (on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 =

"strongly disagree" and 7 = *"strongly agree"*) and the percentage agreeing (i.e., > than the

"neutral" midpoint) are provided in Table 4.

Although most respondents (72.7%) agreed that GameSense was created for people who

have trouble controlling their gambling, a little over half of respondents (53.8%) believed

GameSense was for all people who gamble. Relatedly, a little less than half of all respondents

believed that GameSense was self-relevant.

Table 7

Perceived Target Audience for GameSense

Sources:	Mean (SD)	% agreement
People who have trouble controlling their gaming.	5.38 (1.74)	72.7
People who gamble on a regular basis.	4.99 (1.64)	63.8
People who gamble occasionally.	4.06 (1.71)	40.2
All people who gamble.	4.57 (1.84)	53.8
GameSense, and the responsible gaming education and tools it provides, was developed for players like me.	4.36 (1.65)	45.4

Note. *Ns* range from 984 to 1020. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agreeing". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

Those who indicated an awareness of GameSense did not differ significantly from those

who were unaware on the extent to which they agreed with the first three items ("People who

have trouble controlling their gaming", "People who gamble on a regular basis", and "People

who gamble occasionally"; *ps* > .20; *ds* < .08), but agreed more that GameSense is for all people who gamble (*p* < .001; *d* = .29) and marginally more that GameSense was developed for players like me (*p* = .055, *d* = .13).

4.3 Engagement with GameSense

We assessed engagement with GameSense in two ways. The first way was in terms of whether they had visited a GSIC. The second way was in terms of interactions with a GSA at either a GSIC or on the gaming floor.

4.3.1 Reasons for visiting. All respondents were asked, "Have you ever visited a GameSense Info Center at one of the three Massachusetts casinos?" A total of 195 respondents (17.6% of the full sample) indicated that they had. All those who reported they had visited a GSIC were asked to indicate why they visited the GSIC from a list of 10 reasons (plus an "other" option). Four respondents did not respond to any of the 10 reasons. Thus, analyses were conducted on a sample of 191 respondents.

No single reason stood out in terms of why a respondent visited a GSIC; however, the most reported reason for visiting was because they stumbled upon it (54.4%) or were curious (46.2%). Least often noted was visiting to learn about gambling-related myths (17.4%) or to learn about how games work (16.9%). The full list of reasons (and agreement to those reasons) is provided in Table 8.

Table 8

Reasons for Visiting a GSIC

Reasons:	% agreement
I stumbled upon one and was curious.	55.5
I heard about the Info Center and was curious.	47.1
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard).	40.8
To learn more about responsible gaming (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit).	33.5
To be better informed should I need to pass information to players.	30.9
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card).	30.4
To learn about supports for problem gaming.	23.6
To learn about gaming-related myths.	17.8
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion.	22.0
To learn more about how games work.	17.3
Other	4.7

Note. N = 191; Percentages add to more than 100 as respondents could endorse more than one reason.

To determine whether there were distinct groups of respondents who visited GSICs for different sets of reasons, we conducted a latent class analysis (LCA). The LCA looks for common response patterns in a sample. We determined that two groups could be identified (see Appendix A for details). Group 1 (with 67 respondents) included individuals who indicated that they visited a GSIC because they were curious (about what GameSense was all about) or to get swag (i.e., mostly for non-RG reasons). Consequently, we labeled this group "Curiosity and Swag Inspired". Those in Group 2 (with 124 respondents), the larger of the two groups, indicated that although attracted by the swag, they also indicated visiting for RG reasons. For instance, 89% of this second group indicated that they visited to learn more about responsible gambling (vs 9% of those in Group 1), 78% indicated that they visited to learn more about, and enroll in,

PlayMyWay (vs. 17% of Group 2 respondents), and 78% indicated that they visited to be better informed should they need to pass on information to others (vs. 18% of Group 1 respondents). For this reason, we labeled this group "Information Seekers". Table 9 provides the proportions indicating each reason for the two groups. Figure 1 provides a graphic description of these proportions. Specifically, the distance from the origin (middle) of the graph indicates the proportion of the respondents in that group that indicated that reason.

Table 9

Percent Who Affirmed Each Reason for Visiting a GSIC by Group

Reason	Group 1 "Curiosity and Swag Inspired"	Group 2 "Information Seekers
I heard about the Info Center and was curious.	.38	.85
I stumbled upon one and was curious.	.63	.86
To learn more about how games work.	.02	.57
To learn more about responsible gaming (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit).	.09	.89
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card).	.17	.78
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard).	.50	.67
To learn about gaming-related myths.	.05	.55
To learn about supports for problem gaming.	.06	.73
To be better informed should I need to pass information to players.	.18	.78
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion.	.10	.64

n = 191.

Figure 1

Results of the Latent Class Analysis Examining Reasons for Visiting GameSense with two

Groups
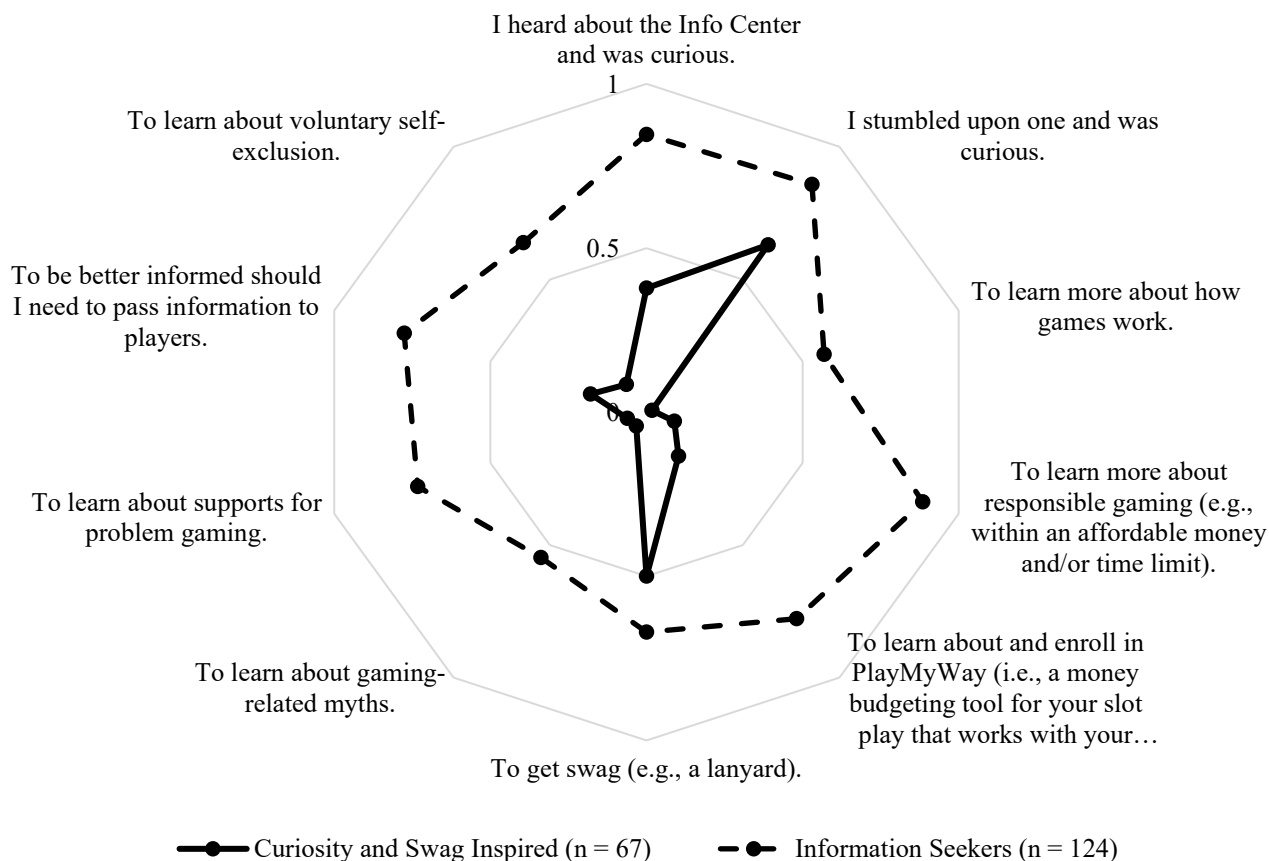
To better understand the two groups, we examined whether they differed in terms of

demographic variables (gender and age) and other player characteristics (e.g., PGSI score,

positive play variables, frequency of visits). Information Seekers tended to be older. There was

also no difference in terms of the proportions of men and women between Information Seekers

and Curiosity and Swag Inspired players. There were no other differences between Information

Seekers and Curiosity and Swag Inspired players (see Table 10 for complete list of variables

assessed).

Table 10

Associations With Group Membership for Those Who Visited a GSIC

Dependent variable	*n*	Curiosity and Swag Inspired	Information Seekers	*d*
Age	152	3.96(1.19)	4.70(1.04)	.67**
Disordered gambling symptomatology	171	4.25(4.86)	5.92(6.20)	.29
Personal Responsibility	177	6.18(.90)	5.87(1.30)	-.26
Gambling Literacy	179	5.94(1.19)	5.36(1.24)	-.47
Honesty and Control	179	5.70(1.35)	5.33(1.56)	-.25
Pre-Commitment	176	5.75(1.23)	5.58(1.51)	-.12
Frequency of gambling at a casino in Massachusetts	191	5.49(.96)	5.89(.97)	-.10

Note. ** $p < .01$. Sample size varies by analysis because of missing responses.

Because the two groups differed by age, we broke down group by age category (see Table 11). Whilst 60.7% of the Curiosity and Swag Inspired respondents were in the 35-54 age range, most (65.7%) of the Information Seekers were 55+.

Table 11

Age Category by Group Membership Among Those who Visited a GSIC

	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Curiosity and Swag Inspired	1.8% (n=1)	5.4% (n=3)	32.1% (n=18)	28.6% (n=16)	19.6% (n=11)	12.5% (n=7)
Information Seekers	0% (n=0)	3.1% (n=3)	11.5% (n=11)	19.8% (n=19)	43.8% (n=42)	21.9% (n=21)

4.3.2 Reasons for not visiting. Respondents who reported they had not yet visited a GSIC were asked to indicate their reasons for not visiting one. Of the 914 respondents who had not visited a GSIC, 782 provided at least one reason. About half of participants reported that they did not visit a GSIC because they believed they already knew how games work (52.9%), knew about PlayMyWay (52.5%), or knew about gaming-related myths (45.2%). Interestingly, a large

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percentage also noted that they had yet to visit because they had not been invited to do so

(60.8%). A relatively low percentage of respondents did not believe that GSAs could help

players (18%) or didn't agree with the presence of GSICs (12.2%). However, approximately one-

third of all respondents believed that GSAs would not be able to teach them anything they did

not already know (33.9%). The full list of reasons (and agreement to those reasons) are

summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Reasons for not Visiting a GSIC

Reasons:	% agreement
No one has asked me to check GameSense out.	58.4
I already know how games work.	50.9
I already know about PlayMyWay - a free, budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play.	50.5
I already know about gaming-related myths.	43.5
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything.	32.6
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players.	17.3
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino.	11.8
Other	6.5

Note. N = 782 who provided at least 1 reason; Percentages add to more than 100 as respondents
could endorse more than one reason.

We then conducted an LCA to examine whether there were subgroups of respondents

who differed in terms of the reasons for not visiting GSICs. The LCA suggested that respondents

who had not visited a GSIC fell into one of three groups. Those in Group 1 (n = 248; 31.7% of

those responding) tended to give only one reason for not visiting a GSIC—most frequently

because no one had asked them to check it out. We labeled this group of respondents "Invitation-

Responsive". Those in Group 2 (n = 132; 16.9% of those responding), had a similar profile of

reasons for not visiting to those in Group 3 (n = 402; 51.4% of those responding) in that patrons

in both groups were composed of regular players who (think they) understand how games work, and thus, see no need for GameSense. What distinguished those in Group 2 from those in Group 3 is that those in Group 2 also held negative view of GameSense and GSA's ability to help players with their gambling. Additionally, over 50% of those in Group 2 do not agree with the presence of GameSense at the casino. Consequently, we labeled those in Group 2 "Self-Assured Non-Believers" and those in Group 3 "Self-Assured". The proportion of respondents in each group indicating each reason is provided in Table 13, and Figure 2 provides a graphic description of these proportions. Specifically, the distance from the origin (middle) of the graph indicates the proportion of the respondents in that group that indicated that reason. Details on the LCA are provided in Appendix A.

Table 13

*Proportion of Respondents who Affirmed Each Reason for not Visiting a GSIC by Group*

Reason	Group 1 "Invitation-Responsive"	Group 2 "Self-Assured Non-Believers"	Group 3 "Self-Assured"
No one has asked me to check GameSense out.	.62	.76	.63
I already know how games work.	.16	.85	.93
I already know about gaming-related myths	.06	.84	.90
I already know about PlayMyWay - a free, budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play.	.31	.74	.80
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything.	.17	.84	.43
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players.	.10	.91	.00
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino.	.07	.54	.04

Note. n per group: *Invitation-Responsive = 248; Self-Assured Non-Believes = 132; Self-Assured = 402.*

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Figure 2

Results of the Latent Class Analysis Examining Reasons for not Visiting GameSense with Three

Groups
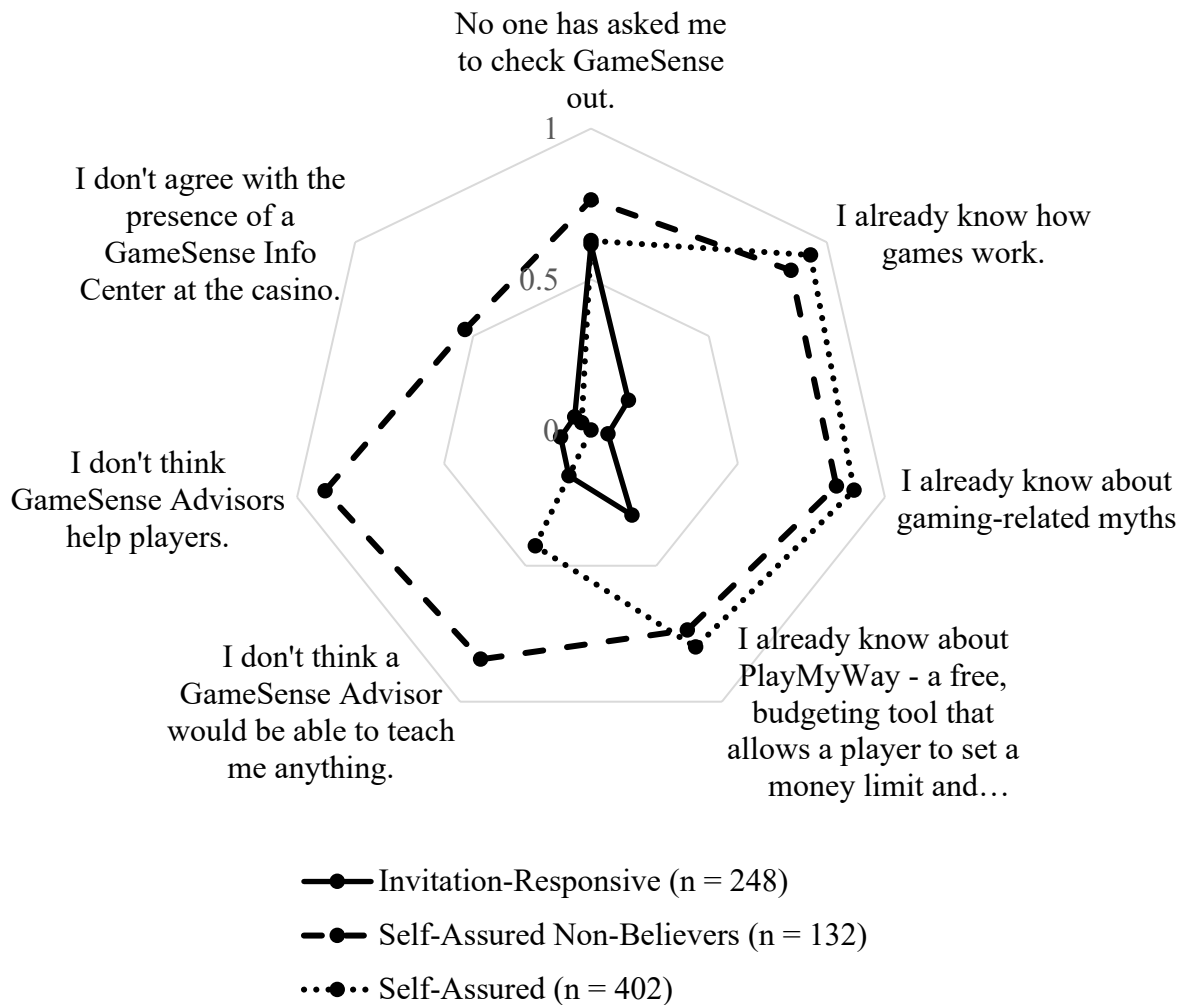
To better understand these groups, we considered whether the groups differed in their

composition in terms of demographic variables (age, gender) and player characteristics (PGSI

score, positive play variables, and frequency of visits). We found that those in the Self-Assured

group were lower in in disordered gambling symptomatology and higher in positive play (all

subscales) than those in Invitation-Responsive or Self-Assured Non-Believers groups, $d = .27$

(see Table 14). Similarly, those in the Self-Assured Group reported greater Personal

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Responsibility compared to those in the Invitation Responsive (*d* =.19) and Self-Assured Non-Believers (*d* = .26) groups. Likewise, those in the Self-Assured group reported greater Gambling Literacy compared to those in the Invitation Responsive (*d* =.22) and Self-Assured Non-Believers (*d* = .37) groups. Moreover, those in the Self-Assured Group reported greater Pre-Commitment compared to those in the Invitation Responsive (*d* =.27) and Self-Assured Non-Believers (*d* = .32) groups. However, those in the Self-Assured Group reported greater Honesty and Control compared to those in the Invitation Responsive group (*d* =.26). Otherwise, there were no statistically significant differences in the distribution of age or gender between the Invitation-Responsive, Self-Assured Non-Believers, and Self-Assured groups.

Table 14

Between Group Differences Among Those who did not Visit a GSIC

		Invitation Responsive	Self-Assured Non-Believers	Self-Assured	
	n	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	η^2
Age	632	52.65(12.38)	52.69(14.59)	55.12(13.33)	.01
Disordered gambling symptomatology	688	5.33(6.22)^a	4.99(5.59)^b	3.80(5.15)^{ab}	.02
Personal Responsibility	716	6.06(1.24)^a	6.00(1.01)^b	6.27(.99)^{ab}	.01
Gambling Literacy	721	5.56(1.23)^a	5.38(1.30)^b	5.80(1.05)^{ab}	.02
Honesty and control	713	5.20(1.81)^a	5.29(1.61)	5.63(1.54)^a	.02
Pre-Commitment	702	5.59(1.62)^a	5.55(1.48)^b	5.99(1.30)^{ab}	.02
Frequency of visits to a casino in Massachusetts	782	5.38(1.12)	5.30(1.19)	5.37(1.12)	<.01

We also asked those who had not visited a GSIC what would motivate them to visit one. Table 15 provides the six options provided (plus an "other" option) as well as the percentage of respondents who responded to that option in the affirmative. Close to half of the respondents noted that they would be interested in visiting a GSIC if they wanted to learn more about RG

(48.2%). Close to half of all respondents also noted they would visit if they wanted to learn more

about PlayMyWay (42.7%) or learn about supports for problem gaming (40.7%). A relatively

lower percentage noted they would visit to get swag (34.8%).

Table 15

Potential Reasons for Visiting a GSIC Among Those Who Had Not Yet Visited One

Reasons:	% agreement
If I wanted to learn more about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit)	48.2
If I wanted to learn more about PlayMyWay - a free, budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play	42.7
If I wanted to learn about supports for problem gaming	40.7
If I wanted to learn more about voluntary self-exclusion for players	32.5
If I wanted to learn more about gaming-related myths.	29.5
If I could get swag (e.g., a lanyard)	34.8
Other	26

Note. N = 782 who provided at least 1 reason; Percentages add to more than 100 as respondents could endorse more than one reason.

   4.3.3 Comparison between those who visited and those who did not visit. Next, we

examined whether there were differences in terms of the perceived purpose of GameSense

between those who visited a GSIC to those who did not. Recall, we provided eight items that

assessed the perceived purpose of GameSense. These items, listed in Table 6, included six

correct purposes and one incorrect purpose. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each

statement was a purpose of GameSense (yes or no). We scored these responses as +1 for a

correct response, -1 for an incorrect response, and 0 if they left the item unanswered. Those who

had visited a GSIC scored higher (i.e., they were more correct in terms of the purpose of

GameSense; $M = 3.15$, $SD = 2.34$) than those who had not ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 2.33$; $t = 4.74$, $p <$

.001; $d = .40$).

We then assessed whether those who interacted with GameSense (i.e., visited a GSIC) differed from those who had not interacted with GameSense (i.e., did not visit a GSIC) in terms of the perceived target audience of GameSense. They did not significantly differ in the extent to which they believed that the target audience for the program was people who have trouble controlling their gambling ($p = .63$; $d = .04$). However, those who interacted with GameSense did agree more that the program was for those who gamble regularly ($p = .011$; $d = .19$), those who gamble occasionally ($p < .001$; $d = .34$), all people who gamble ($p < .001$; $d = .36$), and for players like them ($p < .001$; $d = .37$) than those who had not interacted with GameSense. Thus, interacting with GameSense appears to be linked with a more inclusive (and correct) understanding of the program's target audience.

4.4 Interactions with a GSA

All respondents were asked "Have you ever had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor?" One hundred and eighty-one said they had (16.3%; 11.1% did not answer this question). Informatively, 72.9% (n = 132) of these 181 also visited a GSIC. It is unknown, whether they first visited a GSIC and then interacted with the GSA who was at the GSIC, or whether they first interacted with a GSA on the gaming floor and were invited back to the GSIC to discuss responsible gambling. It is also possible that a visit to a GSIC occurred during a gambling session after the one in which an interaction with a GSA took place. Indeed, GSAs often have short (or long) conversation about issues related (or unrelated) to gambling on the floor as part of a relationship building strategy. It is only after "getting to know" the GSA on the gaming floor that they subsequently come to a GSIC. Unfortunately, the sequence of events was not assessed in the current study.

We did, however, assess the type of interaction players had with a GSA. In Massachusetts, interactions are categorized as simple (i.e., a short, communication from a GSA about issues unrelated to gaming), demonstration (i.e., a longer, communication from a GSA about how a game, RG tool, or concept works), or an exchange (i.e., a two-way communication with a GSA about responsible gaming or problem gaming). Of the 181 respondents who reported having an interaction with a GSA, 78.5% reported a simple interaction, 34.3% indicated a demonstration, and 28.7% indicated an exchange. They were also asked to indicate the approximate number of interactions of each type. For simple interactions, the numbers ranged from 1 to 50, with the median being 2. Of those reporting at least one demonstration, the median was 1 (range: 1 to 10). Of those reporting exchanges, the median was 1 (range: 1 to 10).

To assess the perceived influence interacting with a GSA had on their play, we asked those who had interacted with a GSA to rate the extent to which they agreed that these interactions made them feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly and how games worked on 7-point Likert scales (1 = *"strongly disagree"* to 7 *"strongly agree"*). They were also asked whether they would encourage others to speak with a GSA. Responses are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Perceived Outcome of Interacting with GSAs

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor:	*M* (*SD*)	% agreement
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly.	4.83 (1.51)	53.5
I feel more informed about how gaming games work.	4.63 (1.55)	50.0
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor.	4.94 (1.38)	58.8

Note. Ns ranged from 168 to 172 of 181 who had interacted with a GSA. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

Although these ratings are not particularly positive (i.e., respondents were not especially effusive in their assessment of their interaction), it should be noted that most of the interactions captured in the current study were simple interactions (which are not about responsible or problem gambling). Such interactions are not likely to have a significant effect on the participant.

We then compared those who only reported having a simple interaction with those who reported at least one demonstration or exchange. We found that respondents who reported having a demonstration or exchange reported feeling more informed about how to gamble responsibly (n = 52; M = 5.38, SD = 1.44) than those only receiving a simple interaction (n =119; M = 4.59, SD = 1.49; $t(169)$ = 3.24, $p < .001$, d = .54). Similarly, we found that respondents who reported having a demonstration or exchange reported agreed more that they would encourage others to speak with a GSA (n = 52; M = 5.25, SD = 1.56) compared to those only receiving a simple interaction (n = 117; M = 4.81, SD = 1.28). This difference approached statistical significance, $t(167)$ = 1.92, $p = .057$, d = .32). There were no significant differences between those who indicated a demonstration or exchange and those indicating only simple interactions on the other statements ($ps > .27$, $ds < .18$).

Lastly, we assessed whether those who had engaged with a GSA or GSIC differed from those who had not engaged with a GSA or GSIC on the measured sample characteristics (see Table 17). We found that those who interacted with GameSense (either through a GSIC or with a GSA) scored higher on our measure of disordered gambling symptomatology (PGSI; M = 5.54, SD = 6.06) than those who had not had any interaction with GameSense (M = 4.39, SD = 5.54; t = 2.60, $p = .009$, d = .20). Likewise, we found that those who interacted with GameSense (M = 5.57, SD = .92) reported greater frequency of visiting casinos in Massachusetts in the last three months compared to those who had not had any interaction with GameSense (M = 4.39, SD =

5.54; $t = 2.81$, $p = .005$, $d = .20$). Otherwise, there was no difference between those who had

interacted with GameSense and those who had not interacted with GameSense in terms of their

Personal Responsibility, Gambling Literacy, Pre-Commitment, and Honesty and Control (see

Table 17).

Table 17

Comparison of Patrons Who Had and Had Not Interacted with GameSense[†]

	Interacted with GameSense			Have not Interacted with GameSense						
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	*d*
Disordered gambling symptomatology	217	5.54	6.06	682	4.39	5.53	2.60	897	.009*	.20
Personal Responsibility	222	5.99	1.14	699	6.17	1.10	-2.05	919	.041*	-.16
Gambling Literacy	223	5.57	1.25	700	5.67	1.16	-1.08	921	.280	-.08
Honesty and Control	222	5.37	1.59	700	5.46	1.64	-.71	920	.476	-.06
Pre-Commitment	222	5.59	1.46	694	5.81	1.45	-1.96	914	.050	-.15
Frequency of visits to a casino in Massachusetts	244	5.57	.92	865	5.35	1.13	3.15	470.8	.005*	.20

Note. [†] Interacted with a GSA or visited GSIC; * $p < .05$.

5. Discussion

In the current research, we assessed a sample of regular players from across the three

casinos in Massachusetts to evaluate their knowledge about and use of GameSense RG program.

Specifically, the study aimed to assess the level of awareness among patrons regarding

GameSense, examine their perceptions about the program among those who reported they were

aware of GameSense, and evaluate their engagement through visits to a GSIC and interactions

with a GSA.

5.1 Awareness and Perceptions About GameSense

We found that a clear majority of respondents expressed awareness of the program. This is in line with results from Louderback and colleagues' (2022a) assessment of GameSense, who observed that regular players (those targeted in the current study) have a relatively high level of awareness of the program (compared to infrequent players). Awareness appeared to be a product of casino staff and GSAs informing players about the program as well as advertisements (see Louderback et al., 2022a for a similar finding). Importantly, those who were aware of GameSense expressed a correct understanding about its purpose. Specifically, they believed that the purpose of GameSense is to educate players about RG, provide access to PlayMyWay (i.e., a budgeting tool), and provide support to those who feel their gambling has become problematic. and that players tended to have a positive response to the program. Interestingly, approximately a fifth of players believed that GSICs were a place for players to take a break from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge). Although this perception is not directly aligned with the explicitly stated purposes of GSICs, it raises an intriguing opportunity for the RG landscape. The concept of designated "Play Break" sections within GSICs could serve as an effective way to integrate responsible gambling strategies and increase player engagement with GameSense. By creating a GameSense branded space that encourages players to take breaks during gameplay, similar to the principles of harm reduction seen in the community for addictive substances, casinos could provide a platform for both relaxation and education. Much like health practitioners interact with individuals at safe injection sites, GSAs could engage with players during their breaks, offering RG guidance, resources, and assistance for those interested in managing their gameplay habits more effectively. Such an innovative addition to GSICs could potentially contribute to fostering

a supportive, educational, and health-oriented environment within the casino, promoting RG beliefs and behaviors among players.

There were no differences between those who were aware of GameSense and those who were not aware of GameSense in terms of most of the sample characteristics assessed (age, gender, disordered gambling symptomatology, positive play). The only factor that did differ between these two groups is frequency of visits to a casino in Massachusetts. One reason this may have been the case is that frequent casino visitors are more likely to have repeated exposure to the physical environment and amenities offered within the casino, including promotional materials and signage related to RG programs like GameSense. The repeated exposure to such messaging increases the likelihood of individuals noticing and becoming aware of the program. Second, individuals who visit casinos more frequently may have a greater engagement with gambling activities. This increased involvement in gambling may make them more attuned to information and resources related to RG. They may actively seek out and be more receptive to messages promoting RG practices, including the GameSense program. Lastly, that people who were aware of GameSense visited a casino more frequently than those who were not aware may indicate that it may take time for the program's promotional efforts to become visible to patrons.

The lack of a between group difference on the other sample characteristics is also noteworthy. Although one may expect individuals who frequently visit one of the three casinos in Massachusetts to be more likely to come across someone who tells them about GameSense or an advertisement about GameSense, or those who have elevated symptoms of disordered gambling would be inclined to seek information about RG programs, the study did not reveal such associations. Any potential explanation would be speculative. Future research should target the relatively small proportion of regular players who expressed a lack of awareness of

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GameSense to better understand why they lack awareness of a program that should be highly visible to all regular patrons.

After all respondents were provided an explanation of GameSense, GSAs, and GSICs, respondents were asked who they thought the target audience happened to be. The majority believed that GameSense is for people who have trouble controlling their gambling, whereas only approximately half of respondents correctly believed GameSense is for all people who gamble. Several factors may have contributed to this result. It is possible that some sources of information about GameSense (e.g., friend, fellow player) predominantly emphasize its role in addressing gambling related problems and providing support to individuals with difficulties in controlling their gambling behavior. This messaging might have influenced the perception that GameSense is primarily geared towards those who already exhibit signs of problematic gambling. Second, there is preexisting societal and cultural biases that associate RG programs like GameSense solely with individuals who have gambling problems. These stereotypes or stigmas surrounding RG may influence people's perceptions and lead them to believe that GameSense is not relevant or applicable to all individuals who engage in gambling activities. It is important for further education and communication efforts to emphasize that GameSense is not solely for individuals with gambling problems but is relevant and beneficial to all individuals who gamble. By highlighting the program's broader role in promoting RG practices, enhancing the gaming experience, and providing valuable information and resources, misconceptions can be addressed, and a more inclusive understanding of GameSense's target audience can be fostered.

5.2 Engagement with GameSense

Although it can be argued that there was a relatively high level of awareness, there are opportunities to increase engagement. The most common reasons for visiting a GSIC were that the patron stumbled upon it or out of curiosity. Reasons for not visiting included already having knowledge about how games work, familiarity with PlayMyWay, and not being asked to visit. However, a substantial proportion of respondents who did not visit expressed interest in visiting a GSIC to learn more about RG, PlayMyWay, and supports for problem gaming. Thus, respondents (even those who had yet to engage with GameSense) saw something in the program that may be of use to them.

We did, however, find that respondents who engaged with GameSense were more likely to score high in disordered gambling symptomatology, visit a casino in Massachusetts more frequently, and score lower on acceptance of personal responsibility for their gambling compared to those who had yet to engage with the program. Individuals with elevated symptoms of disordered gambling (and who attend the casino with frequency) may be engaging with GameSense for several reasons. Firstly, their engagement could stem from a recognition of their gambling-related difficulties, as individuals experiencing disordered gambling symptoms often have a heightened awareness of their challenges. They may proactively seek out GameSense to address and manage their symptoms, recognizing the need for assistance and support. Secondly, their visits to GameSense may be driven by a desire for guidance and resources. Those with higher levels of disordered gambling symptomatology often face negative consequences and challenges associated with their gambling behavior. By visiting GameSense, they can access resources, tools, and guidance to regain control over their gambling behavior, make informed decisions, and seek help when needed. Lastly, the targeted outreach efforts of GameSense may

play a role in attracting individuals with higher disordered gambling symptomatology. A focus

on support services may effectively resonate with those who have gambling-related problems.

However, doing so may create stigma around the GameSense program among those who do not

have gambling-related problems leading to the (incorrect) perception that GameSense is not for

all players.

Indeed, although GameSense aims to promote RG for all individuals, those who accepted

personal responsibility for their gambling were less likely to engage with the program. One

possible reason is that these individuals may perceive their gambling behavior as already aligned

with positive play practices. They may have a balanced approach to gambling, with minimal

negative consequences or problems. Consequently, they may not feel the immediate need for

additional support or resources offered by GameSense (see Gainsbury et al., 2020; Turner et al.,

2005). Moreover, individuals who accept responsibility for their gambling may not perceive

themselves as the target audience for RG programs. They may view such programs as primarily

designed for individuals with gambling-related difficulties, rather than for those who already

exhibit positive play behaviors. This perception could lead to a lower motivation to actively

engage with GameSense. To address this, policy makers could highlight the benefits of

GameSense for all gamblers, including those who already accept responsibility for their

gambling, in terms of enhancing their overall gambling experience and maintaining positive play

behaviors.

Unfortunately, as shown by Sevigny and Ladouceur (2003), rational knowledge about the

game often "switches off" during gambling and "switches on" again after ceasing the activity.

Put differently, even though respondents may understand the cognitive biases associated with

how games work and the odds of winning, players may slip into non-rational patterns of thought

when gambling (see Clark & Wohl, 2022; Delfabbro et al., 2020a). GameSense can offer

information and tools to help prevent this from occurring, thus benefiting the full spectrum of

players to gamble more responsibly (Hing et al., 2017; Sevigny & Ladouceur, 2003).

Informatively, we conducted a LCA on the reasons why those who visited did so. We

found that there were two distinct groups of respondents among those who visited a GSIC: those

who visited primarily because they were curious or for swag (Curiosity and Swag Inspired) and

those who visited primarily for RG reasons (Information Seekers). We found that Information

Seekers tended to be older than the Curiosity and Swag Inspired respondents. We also found that

three distinct groups of respondents who did not visit a GSIC: those who reported not visiting a

GSIC primarily because no one had invited them (Invitation-Responsive); those who did not

engage with GameSense because they believed they already knew all the information (e.g., about

responsible and problem gambling; Self-Assured) that GameSense had to offer; and those who

believed they already knew all the information that GameSense had to offer and also did not

agree with the presence of GSICs at the casino (Self-Assured Non-Believers). Importantly, the

Self-Assured Non-Believers was the smallest of the three groups in terms of the number of

respondents who comprised the group. It is also important to note that half of all Self-Assured

Non-Believers did not endorse this view, and there was near 0% endorsement of this (anti-

GameSense) idea among those in either the Invitation-Responsive and Self-Assured groups.

We also found those in Self-Assured group were lower in disordered gambling

symptomatology and higher in positive play than those in the other two groups. This suggests

that those in the Self-Assured group may have, in fact, already be well-informed about gambling

games, their associated risk, and means to minimize those risks. Such players may be correct in

their beliefs that they have a low need for RG programs like GameSense. Of importance for

MGC and GSAs will be differentiating between people who express that they do not need GameSense because they are already positive players (as may be the case among the Self-Assured) and those who express a similar sentiment erroneously (as may be the case among the Self-Assured Non-Believers). In fact, the Self-Assured Non-Believers may be at the greatest risk for gambling-related problems yet may be the most reticent to engage with GameSense.

When considering the implementation of RG programs like GameSense at casinos, it is essential to acknowledge that some individuals who have never engaged with such initiatives may harbor reservations about their presence. Several factors may contribute to this skepticism. Firstly, a lack of awareness may hinder their understanding of the purpose and significance of RG. Secondly, some players may be skeptical about the effectiveness of these programs, and even believe that the programs are merely a means for the industry to satisfy regulators (i.e., the industry does not truly care about the well-being of patrons), which can further fuel this viewpoint. Policy makers should consider these perspectives and address them through comprehensive education, targeted outreach efforts, and evidence-based communication to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the value and necessity of RG programs in maintaining a safe and enjoyable gambling environment for all.

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Increase awareness about the benefits of GameSense. Regular patrons are aware of GameSense but are less familiar with the range of tools available, and in many cases unaware of how the program may benefit them. A campaign that informs regular, low- and moderate-risk players about the benefits of the program may correct misunderstandings about the relevance of the program for them.

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Recommendation #2: Attract patrons through tailored RG messaging. Among those who engaged with GameSense, we found that most (65.7%) of the Information Seekers were 55+ and most (60.7%) of the Curiosity and Swag Inspired respondents were in the 35-54 age range. This suggests RG messaging may benefit from segmentation based on age. We recommend MGC embrace player segmentation to attract patrons. Older respondents were more likely to engage with GameSense for RG purposes. Thus, older people may be more receptive to RG related messages about GameSense. To tap into the younger demographic, perhaps heightening curiosity about GameSense (e.g., campaigns that ask "What is GameSense") or offer swag that will be attractive to a younger demographic. Prior research has already shown the benefits of player segmentation. Specifically, younger players prefer messages that use non-accusatory language that avoids invoking feelings of blame or guilt as well as tips that can assist them in becoming "better gamblers" (Gainsbury et al., 2018a). Capitalize on this by informing younger players about how GameSense tools can be utilized to save money, such as avoiding chasing losses. By framing RG programs as tools for financial management, casinos can attract younger patrons and foster a positive and empowering gambling experience for this demographic.

Recommendation #3: Normalize the use of GameSense. Foster a culture that embraces and normalizes the use of GameSense. By normalizing the use of GameSense tools and seamlessly integrating them into the gambling environment, players' attitudes can be positively influenced, dispelling the notion that GameSense is solely for those with gambling problems. This approach has been shown to increase both players' adoption of GameSense and their overall usage of its resources (Catania & Griffiths, 2021; Ivanova et al., 2019; Procter et al., 2019). By leveraging GameSense to improve gambling literacy, the MGC can create a more informed and empowered player base, fostering a positive and responsible gambling culture.

Recommendation #4: Enhance the role and perceptions of GSAs. GSAs play a critical role in disseminating information about the program to patrons. The more they can interact with players, the greater their potential impact. Needed is a campaign that increases understanding that GameSense is for all players (not only for individuals with gambling problems). Doing so will help all players feel comfortable seeking help, regardless of their specific needs. This approach should not only help destigmatize the role of GSAs but also highlights their broader function in providing information, support, and resources to enhance the overall gaming experience for everyone.

Recommendation #5: Create a dedicated, GameSense branded, "Play Break" section within GSICs. Recognizing the significance of play breaks as a key responsible gambling strategy, and considering that approximately a fifth of players view GSICs as potential areas for taking breaks from the gaming floor, we propose the introduction of dedicated "Play Break" area within GSICs. This approach would offer a unique opportunity for GSAs to engage players in meaningful interactions, such as demonstrations or exchanges, about RG practices. By combining the promotion of play breaks with educational discussions, casinos can proactively encourage responsible gambling behaviors while providing a supportive environment that aligns with players' relaxation needs. This innovative addition not only enhances player well-being but also facilitates a more comprehensive approach to RG within the casino setting.

Recommendation #6: More research is required. Additional research is required to better understand the short and long-term effects of interacting with GameSense on players' beliefs and behaviors. Specifically, a longitudinal study where players who do and players who do not engage with GameSense are assessed (by way of survey and player account data) both before and after engagement with GameSense.

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5.4 Limitations

A few limitations of the current research should be noted. First, we assessed regular players, which may limit the representativeness of the sample and may not fully capture the awareness and usage of a RG program at casinos. However, regular patrons are arguably more familiar with the casino environment. Assessing GameSense awareness, perceptions, and engagement among people who have only visited the casino once or a couple times may likewise skew findings. It should also be noted that the current sample was not a random sample. To our knowledge, limited research has been conducted to determine the characteristics of regular gamblers in Massachusetts. Thus, the regular players recruited for this study may not be representative of all players. Of note, the behaviors and attitudes of less frequent gamblers could differ from those of regular players, and our study's outcomes may not accurately reflect their perspectives on awareness and engagement with RG programs. As a result the ability to generalize our results to the broader gambling community may be constrained. We acknowledge this limitation and caution against extrapolating our findings to individuals who gamble less frequently. It is important to capture the experiences of regular players as this is who has the potential to come into contact with GameSense more frequently. This study serves as a valuable exploration within the context of regular players, and future research is warranted to comprehensively examine the dynamics of a RG programs across diverse gambling frequency groups.

Second, longitudinal data is needed to assess why players who have interacted with a GSA are higher in disordered gambling symptomatology but lower in Pre-Commitment and Personal Responsibility. It is to be expected that Pre-Commitment and Personal Responsibility scores would increase after speaking with a GSA; however, players who have interacted with a

GSA have lower Pre-Commitment and Personal Responsibility scores than those who have not engaged with the program. Therefore, a longitudinal study is needed to assess if players' Pre-Commitment and Personal Responsibility scores are increasing after speaking with a GSA or visiting a GSIC.

Third, there was significant missing data, with approximately 20% of participants failing to provide responses to certain questions. This introduces potential biases and reduces the overall sample size available for analysis. Consequently, our findings may be limited in their generalizability and could be skewed towards the characteristics and perspectives of those individuals who did provide complete responses. The missing data also pose challenges in accurately assessing the relations between variables and may affect the reliability and validity of our results. Future research should strive to address this limitation by implementing strategies to minimize missing data (e.g., reduce the length of the survey)

Lastly, this study did not examine whether differences in employee training impacts players' perceptions of GameSense. Catania and Griffiths (2021) found that if casino staff were not sufficiently trained in RG, they might not be able to properly handle contact with players. Specifically, if staff across the different casinos are given different messages about gambling, front-line staff may pass along erroneous cognitions to players (e.g., that persistence pays off) or the belief that RG tools and GameSense is for players who are engaging in problematic gambling behaviors.

5.5 Conclusion

The current study sheds light on the awareness and perceptions surrounding the GameSense program, presenting valuable opportunities for policy makers. Although most regular gamblers were aware of the program, there are opportunities to increase engagement.

Notably, those who actively engaged with GameSense exhibited higher levels of disordered gambling symptomatology and lower levels of positive play, suggesting that those who need GameSense the most are, in fact, engaging with the program. These findings hold significant implications for the development and implementation of RG programs. To maximize their impact, policy makers should consider increasing awareness of RG programs, tailoring them to address the specific needs of different target audiences, and promoting positive play across all types of gamblers.

There is a need for further research on the challenges and opportunities available to increase awareness, perceptions, and engagement with GameSense. Specifically, future investigations should prioritize identifying effective strategies to enhance the belief that GameSense is for all players. Doing so should have downstream effects on engagement. Additionally, the development of tailored programs catering to the diverse needs of different types of gamblers is crucial. By capitalizing on these opportunities and implementing evidence-based approaches, policy makers can foster a more informed and responsible gambling landscape, promoting positive play and mitigating the risks associated with disordered gambling behaviors.

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Appendix A: Supplemental Information about the Latent Class Analyses

Latent class analyses were used to identify typologies of reasons for having visited and not visited a Gamesense information center, respectively. In each latent class analysis, a discrete latent variable was used to characterize the cross-classification of the observed binary variables. As well, in each latent class analysis, we examined the fit of 2-class, 3-class, and 4-class models. The Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was used to determine which model provided the best fit to the data. The model with the lowest BIC value provides the best fit to the data. We used the "elbow" method (Masyn, 2013), which involves plotting the BIC values from the different models and visually identifying the model at which decreases in BIC values start to diminish relative to the addition of more classes. In addition, we used the Lo et al. (2001) likelihood ratio test (LMR-LRT) to compare adjacent models. A statistically significant LMR-LRT value indicates that the $k + 1$ model provides a better fit to the data than the k model. However, if the LMR-LRT was not statistically significant, then the BICs of the adjacent models were compared. Furthermore, we conducted checks for interpretability and precision of the results by examining whether any class had small counts and entropy values close to one. Entropy values closer to one indicate that a given model is good at classifying participants into groups based on their response patterns. If these checks were successful, then the bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLRT) was used to confirm model fit. The BLRT is also a relative model test, with a statistically significant value indicating that the $k + 1$ model fits the data better than the k model. When the BLRT did not converge, we relied on BIC.

Fit statistics for the latent class analyses with varying number of classes (two to four) for both LCAs conducted (reasons for visiting and reasons for not visiting) are reported in Table A1. Four participants from the LCA analysis had no data on reasons for visiting and so they were excluded from the LCA. Among those who provided at least one reason for visiting a GameSense information center, we determined that a 2-group model provided the best fit to the data based on the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) "elbow" method. Although the 3-group model provided a good fit to the data relative to the 2-group model via the Lo et al. (2001) likelihood ratio test (LMR-LRT), the BIC for the 3-group model was slightly larger than the 2-group model.

LCA: Reasons for visiting a GSIC

The dependent variable in these analyses was group membership with Group 1 coded as "1" (n = 67) and Group 2 coded as "2" (n =142). For analyses only involving gender, there was one participant that preferred to specify their gender and six preferred not to disclose their gender. These participants were excluded from the analyses involving gender as results will be unreliable due their small sample size.

LCA: Reasons for not visiting a GSIC

For participants who never visited a GSIC, we determined that the 3-group model provided the best fit to the data based on the BIC "elbow" method, LMRT, and BLRT (see Table A1).

Table A1

Model Fit Indices Of The Latent Class Analyses

Number of groups	BIC	LMRT *p*-value	BLRT *p*-value	Entropy	Smallest class size %
Visited a GSIC					
2	1525.93	<.01	<.01	.70	35.08%
3	1534.46	.02	<.01	.62	17.28%
4	1567.46	.20	1.00	.67	3.67%
Never visited a GSIC					
2	5164.24	<.01	<.01	.69	34.91%
3	5062.94	<.01	<.01	.68	16.88%
4	5095.13	.27	.08	.67	7.67%
Note. BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion; LMRT = Lo, Mendell, and Rubin Likelihood Ratio Test; BLRT = Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio Test;					

Appendix B: Recruitment Email and Survey

SURVEY NAME	**[Logo]** GameSense GameSense: Players Survey **(Header – survey title)** GameSense: Players Survey from [casino name], Carleton University, and Massachusetts Gaming Commission
EMAIL 1 – Invitation	**(Subject line)** Complete this survey for a $10 Amazon gift card **(Header)** GameSense: Players Survey conducted by Carleton University supported by [casino name], Massachusetts Gaming Commission, and International Center for Responsible Gaming **(Headline)** Give us your thoughts about GameSense and receive a **$10 gift card! *** **(Body copy)** GameSense As a [rewards program name] member, we are asking for your thoughts on GameSense at [casino name]. We are interested in your thoughts even if you have never heard of GameSense. You'll receive a $10 Amazon gift card just for completing the short 10-min survey! The survey will be open until January 1, 2023 or we reached 300 participants (whichever comes first). So participate now before it is too late. **(Offer callout)** COMPLETE 1 SURVEY: RECEIVE 1 $10 GIFT CARD* **\<Button\>** Start Now (ENGLISH) \<Link to survey landing page\> * Some restrictions apply. To receive the $10 gift card you must be eligible to participate in the survey and must complete at least 75% of the survey

Email Footer (footnote)	See full Terms and Conditions for details. Please do not reply to this message. If you wish to contact us, click here. For designated [rewards program name] members only. Must be 21 years of age or older. See official Terms and Conditions for promotional details. We value your privacy. Patrons with self-excluded or trespassed status as determined by [casino name], will not be eligible to participate in this promotion. We will not be responsible for communications which contain incorrect or inaccurate information due to human or technical error or which are delayed or misdirected due to any incorrect or inaccurate capture of customer information, technical malfunctions, human or technical error, visual or printing errors, or garbled data or transmissions, omission, interruption, deletion, defect or failures of any telephone, computer line or network, computer equipment, software or any combination thereof. This email was sent by [casino name], the Gambling Lab at Carleton University, and Massachusetts Gaming Commission

GameSense: Players Survey

Informed Consent

Research personnel: The following people are involved in this study, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:
Dr. Michael Wohl (Principal Investigator; michael.wohl@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2908);
Dr. Nassim Tabri (Principal Investigator; nassim.tabri@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 1727);
Dr. Chris Davis (Principal Investigator; chris.davis@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2251);
Grace Gaudett (Other research personnel; GraceGaudett@cmail.carleton.ca);
Lauren Belyea (Other research personnel; LaurenBelyea@cmail.carleton.ca).

Concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact the Carleton University Ethics Board (ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: We are asking for some input from players about GameSense. We are interested in your thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors. Even if you have never heard of any of these, we welcome your input.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. It is possible, however, that you could experience some distress when thinking about past or current gaming activities. If you are experiencing problems with your gambling, feel free to call 1-800-327-5050 for treatment options or 1-800-426-1234 for help to exclude yourself from the Massachusetts casinos. A copy of this information will be provided to you in the debriefing sheet following the questionnaires.

Benefits/Compensation: We are offering a $10 Amazon.com Gift Card for completing this online survey, which should take you approximately 10 minutes. Your gift card will be emailed to you should you provide us with a valid email address.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The information you provide will be kept confidential. This information will be aggregated with the information collected from other participants and used only for research and knowledge translation purposes. All information collected will be stored securely on Qualtrics' servers located in Toronto, and thus not subject to the Patriot Act. Once data from this survey are matched with your player data (if authorized by you), all identifying information will be destroyed (by **February 2022**). Anonymized data will be stored on the computers of the researchers and research assistants involved with this project. Because there will be no personal information associated with the data, the dataset will be stored electronically and kept indefinitely. Additionally, we will upload this anonymized dataset to an online data repository called Open Science Framework (http://osf.io/) for research and teaching purposes. Aggregate data may also be used in publications, presentations, and future research. The (fully anonymized) data from this study may be released to journals upon request. Lastly, anonymized data may be shared with trusted colleagues.

Right to withdraw: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer certain questions or to withdraw your data upon completion of the survey. To withdraw your data, please email the researchers. Upon withdrawal, all your information will be permanently deleted.

If you would like to withdraw during the study, you may click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of each page. By clicking "withdraw" you will automatically be re-directed to the debriefing page including the links to access support services.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board B (Reference #117682) and is being funded by Massachusetts Gaming Commission. The survey has the support of MGM Springfield/Encore Boston Harbor/Plainridge Park Casino.

By checking this box, you agree to the following terms:

○ I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. I understand that I will be compensated with a $10 Amazon.com Gift Card for my participation in this study. My participation in this study is voluntary. (1)

○ I do not consent to the study. (2)

Ineligibility Debriefing

Thank you for your interest in taking the GameSense: Players Survey. Unfortunately, you do not qualify to complete the survey at this time.

For more information on the GameSense: General Players Survey, please contact the Gaming Lab at Carleton University at gaming.lab@carleton.ca

Eligibility Criteria

I am at least 21 years old

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

I have gambled at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC in the last 3 months

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

In the last 3 months, I have visited MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC ____ times

○ 0 times (1)

○ 1 time (2)

○ 2 times (3)

○ 3 times (4)

○ 4 times (5)

○ 5 or more times (6)

Measures

Have you heard about GameSense?

○ Yes - I have heard about GameSense. (1)

○ No - I have never heard about GameSense. (2)

I heard about GameSense from...

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

Friends (1)	○	○
Other players (2)	○	○
Casino staff (3)	○	○
A GameSense Advisor (4)	○	○
Massgaming.com (5)	○	○
Social media (6)	○	○
Print advertisements (7)	○	○
Radio advertisements (8)	○	○
TV advertisements (9)	○	○
Other (please specify): (10)	○	○

Based on your current understanding of GameSense, what is its purpose?

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge) (1)	○	○
It's a program that teaches players how games work (2)	○	○
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit) (3)	○	○
It offers a place where players can bet on sports (4)	○	○
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay - a budgeting tool where you track your play and receive notifications as you get closer to the budget you've set (5)	○	○
It's a program that helps dispel gaming-related myths (6)	○	○
It offers a place where players can find where to get support if they believe their gaming has become problematic (7)	○	○
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts (8)	○	○
Other (please specify): (9)	○	○

GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy.

GameSense Advisors work at a **GameSense Info Center** located at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the areas of responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for help. Many GameSense Advisors come to the position with

professional gaming experience which is useful in understanding patrons' needs.

I think that the target audience for GameSense is...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
People who have trouble controlling their gaming. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gamble on a regular basis. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gamble occasionally. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
All people who gamble. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

GameSense, and the responsible gaming education and tools it provides, was developed for players like me.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
GameSense, and the responsible gaming education and tools it provides, was developed for players like me. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

Have you visited a GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC?

○ Yes, I visited the GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (1)

○ No, I have not visited a GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)

Please indicate your main reasons for visiting a GameSense Info Center.

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)
I heard about the Info Center and was curious. (1)	○	○
I stumbled upon one and was curious. (2)	○	○
To learn more about how games work. (3)	○	○
To learn more about responsible gaming (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit). (4)	○	○
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card). (5)	○	○
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard). (6)	○	○
To learn about gaming-related myths. (7)	○	○
To learn about supports for problem gaming. (8)	○	○
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion. (10)	○	○
Other (please specify): (11)	○	○

Please indicate your reasons for NOT visiting a GameSense Info Center.

	Response

	Yes (1)	No (2)
No one has asked me to check GameSense out. (1)	○	○
I already know how games work. (2)	○	○
I already know about gaming-related myths. (3)	○	○
I already know about PlayMyWay - a free, budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play. (4)	○	○
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything. (5)	○	○
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players. (6)	○	○
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino. (7)	○	○
Other (please specify): (8)	○	○

I would go to a GameSense Info Center if...

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

I wanted to learn more about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit) (5)	○	○
I could get swag (e.g., a lanyard) (6)	○	○
I wanted to learn more about PlayMyWay - a free, budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play (7)	○	○
I wanted to learn more about gaming-related myths (8)	○	○
I wanted to learn about supports for problem gaming (9)	○	○
I wanted to learn more about voluntary self-exclusion for players (10)	○	○
Other (please specify): (11)	○	○

Have you ever had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor (i.e., a trained responsible gaming specialist who works at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC)?

○ Yes - I have had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (1)

○ No - I have never had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

Please indicate the (approximate) number of interactions you have had with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC using the following categories. Please respond with a digit (e.g., 10).

☐   Simple (i.e., a short, communication from a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gaming). Number of times = _____ (1) _____

☐   Demonstration (i.e., a longer, communication from a GameSense Advisor about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works). Number of times = _____ (2) _____

☐   Exchange (i.e., a two-way communication with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gaming or problem gaming). Number of times = _____ (3) _____

Now we want you to think about an interaction you have had with a GameSense advisor that has had the greatest influence on your beliefs about gaming or your gaming behavior.

Please take a moment to think about the most impactful interaction you have had with a GameSense Advisor.

What was the nature of this influential interaction with a GameSense Advisor?

○ It was a simple interaction (i.e., a short, communication from a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gaming). (1)

○ It was a demonstration (i.e., a longer, communication from a GameSense Advisor about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works). (2)

○ I had an exchange with a GameSense Advisor (i.e., a two-way communication with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gaming or problem gaming). (3)

Please tell us a bit more about this influential interaction. Who started the interaction? What was it about?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor…

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more informed about how gaming games work. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the casino cares about me. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following items.

Because MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC has GameSense onsite ….

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I consider MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC a good place to gamble. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am more trusting of MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am more satisfied with MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a stronger sense of connection to MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MGM Springfield/ENH/PPC meets or exceeds my expectations for a gaming operator. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more loyal to MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC wants me to keep my gaming within an affordable limit. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

On the following pages, we are going to ask you some questions about your beliefs and behaviors as they pertain to gaming.

In the **last 3 months**, what proportion of your gaming happened at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC:

	0% (1)	About 25% (2)	About 50% (3)	About 75% (4)	100% (5)
Response (1)	○	○	○	○	○

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

In the **last 3 months**, when you visited MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC, how often did you play:

	Never (0%) (1)	Rarely (1-33%) (2)	Sometimes (34-66%) (3)	Often (67-99%) (4)	Always (100%) (5)
Slot machines (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Table games (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Video table games (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Lottery (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Please think about your gaming at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC over the last three months.

Money/location In **the last 3 months,** approximately **how much money** have you spent gaming at **MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC**? (Please answer to the closest dollar; e.g., 50).

Over the **last 3 months, overall,** have you won, lost, or broke even playing at **MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC**?

○ I have won money at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC (1)

○ I have lost money at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC (2)

○ I have broken even at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC (3)

Approximately how much money have you won playing at **MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC** in this period of time? Please answer in dollars.

_____

Approximately how much money have you lost playing at **MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC** in this period of time? Please answer in dollars.

_____

In the **last 3 months,** how often did you use your **Rewards Card** while playing at **MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC**?

○ Never (0%) (1)

○ Rarely (1-33%) (2)

○ Sometimes (34-66%) (3)

○ Often (67-99%) (4)

○ Always (100%) (5)

In the **last 3 months,** overall **how much money** have you spent gaming **anywhere**? (Please answer to the closest dollar; e.g., 50).

_____

The following statements have to do with your beliefs and opinions about gaming. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

I believe that...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I should be able to walk away from gaming at any time. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should be aware of how much money I spend when I gamble. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's my responsibility to spend only money that I can afford to lose. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should only gamble when I have enough money to cover all my bills first. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gaming is not a good way to make money. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My chances of winning get better after I have lost. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I gamble more often, it will help me to win more than I lose. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

In the last 3 months...

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Frequently (5)	Usually (6)	Always (7)
I felt in control of my gaming behavior. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was honest with my family and/or friends about the amount of MONEY I spent gaming. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was honest with my family and/or friends about the amount of TIME I spent gaming. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I only gambled with MONEY that I could afford to lose. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I only spent TIME gaming that I could afford to spend. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I considered the amount of MONEY I was willing to lose BEFORE I gambled. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I considered the amount of TIME I was willing to spend BEFORE I gambled. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The following statements consist of various reasons why some people gamble. Please answer the following items by indicating how often you gamble for each of the following reasons.

	Always (1)	Most of the time (2)	About half the time (3)	Sometimes (4)	Never (5)
To forget your worries. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Because winning would change your lifestyle. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
To win money. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Because you enjoy thinking about what you would do if you won a jackpot. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Because it helps when you are feeling nervous or depressed. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
To be sociable. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Because it's exciting. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
To cheer you up when you're in a bad mood. (8)	○	○	○	○	○

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

When you think of the last 3 months...

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)	Always (5)
How often have you bet more than you could really afford to lose? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you gone back another day to try to win back the money you lost? (3)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble? (4)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you felt that you might have a problem with gaming? (5)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have people criticized your betting or told you that you had a gaming problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true? (6)	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you felt guilty about the way you gamble, or what happens when you gamble? (7)	○	○	○	○	○

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

How often has your gaming caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety? (8)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
How often has your gaming caused any financial problems for you or your household? (9)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Not at all (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither disagree nor agree (3)	Somewhat agree (5)	Extremely (6)
How I feel about myself is largely based on the amount of money I have. (1)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My moods are influenced by the amount of money I have. (2)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
People will think less of me if I don't have a lot of money. (3)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The opportunities that are available to me depend on the amount of money I have. (4)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

I am a MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards member

    ○ Yes (1)

    ○ No (2)

What tier of the rewards program are you in?

    ○ Sapphire (i.e., blue card) (1)

    ○ Pearl (i.e., white card) (2)

    ○ Gold (i.e., yellow card) (3)

    ○ Platinum (i.e., grey card) (4)

    ○ Noir (i.e., black card) (5)

Permission to Access MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards Player Data

 The purpose of the Survey is to get your input about gaming and responsible gaming attitudes and behaviors. We want to know what you like or don't like about responsible gaming programming and your gaming behavior.

 For this reason, and with the support of MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC, we are asking for your permission to access your personal player-account data over the last three months. Specifically, we would like to know what games you have played and how much you have won or lost. Your name will not be attached to your information (i.e., the casino will not provide the research team with your identifying information). Your player data will be kept confidential—no state or other entities will have access to it. Your player data will be protected by Carleton University and not released to anyone outside the research team. Once data from the survey have been matched to your player data, your Rewards number will be deleted from all research records.

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

 * You can complete the survey and receive the gift card even if you do not provide permission to access your player data.

○ I consent (1)

○ I do not consent (2)

*This survey is open to **MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards** member invitees only. The survey can only be completed once for compensation (i.e., the Amazon.com Gift Card).

 My MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards identification number is:

If you do not remember your **MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards** number, we can access your player account using your name instead. You will be given the option to do so on the next page.

Because I don't remember my **MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards** number, I give permission to the researchers to access my player account using my name.
 * The research team will delete any record of your name as soon as we link your player data with your survey data (by March 31, 2023).

 My MGM/EBH/PPC Rewards account is under the name of:

_____

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

What is your gender identity?

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ Gender-fluid (3)

○ Trans man (4)

○ Trans woman (5)

○ Nonbinary (6)

○ Two-spirit (7)

○ Prefer to specify: My gender is_____ (8)

_____

○ Prefer not to answer (9)

What is your age?

_____

Thank you for completing the GameSense: Players Survey!

  The information you have provided in this survey will help us provide better tools to promote positive play. Your feedback will help us improve GameSense.

  To receive your $10 Amazon.com Gift Card, please provide an email address below (gift cards will be distributed within 48 hours. We appreciate your patience):

_____

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT WITH GAMESENSE

In three and six months from now, we will conduct follow-up surveys. You will receive a $15 Amazon.com Gift Card for completing each follow-up survey.

I grant permission to be contacted for follow-up surveys:

○ Yes, please contact me at the email address listed above. (1)

○ Yes, but please contact me at this email address instead: (2)

_____

○ No, I would prefer not to be contacted for follow-up surveys. (3)

Thank you for participating in this research!

 What is the purpose of this research?
 This study aims to better understand how gamblers approach responsible play strategies and make decisions about their gaming behaviors.

 What can I do if I feel like I need help with gaming concerns?
 If you are experiencing problems with your gambling, feel free to call 1.800.327.5050 for treatment options, 1.800.426.1234 for help to exclude yourself from the Massachusetts casinos, or visit GameSense at https://gamesensema.com/ and click on the live-chat option.

 If I have any further questions, please feel free to contact us:
 If you have any questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact the research team at gambling.lab@carleton.ca (should you wish to contact us at a later date, please make note of this email address).

 For more information on how to keep your gambling fun and safe, please contact www.gamesensma.com

 Ethical concerns: This study has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B Reference # 117682). If you have any ethical concerns about this study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (ethics@carleton.ca).

Informing Responsible Gambling Education in Massachusetts Casinos:

An Examination of Patrons Who Engaged with GameSense Advisors

Michael J. A. Wohl   Gray E. Gaudett   Nima Orazani   Christopher G. Davis   Nassim Tabri

Carleton University

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Authorship and acknowledgements

Authorship

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl, Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Carleton University Gambling Laboratory (CUGL) focuses on, among other things, factors that predict disordered gambling (e.g., erroneous beliefs, financial focus), facilitators of responsible gambling (e.g., monetary limit setting and adherence), and means to overcome barriers to behavior change (e.g., nostalgia for life lived before the addictive behavior took hold). Members of CUGL also examine the potential pitfalls and possible harm-minimization utility of rewards program membership. Dr. Wohl is the lead author of this report.

Gray E. Gaudett is a Master's student in Psychology under the supervision of Dr. Michael Wohl. Their research interests include factors that predict and maintain recovery from an addictive behavior and effective treatment programming. They contributed to all sections of the report.

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Dr. Christopher G. Davis,
Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Dr. Davis's research lies at the intersection of social, personality and health psychology. In general terms, he explores the social, contextual, and personality factors that influence our psychological health. Relevant to the present context, he studies the psychological factors that affect gambling and substance use behavior. With respect to this report, he was responsible for data analysis and the production tables and figures, editing drafts of the report, and provided analytic and other support.

Dr. Nassim Tabri, Associate Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory focuses on transdiagnostic risk and maintenance factors for health-compromising behaviors, with a focus on disordered gambling and eating. Another focus of the Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory is on the role of money and financial success in the etiology and maintenance of disordered gambling. With respect to this report, he provided analytic and other support, and edited drafts of the report.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

What was the purpose of this evaluation of GameSense?

This evaluation aimed to understand why people engage with GameSense, a responsible gambling (RG) program in casinos, and to assess the impact of these interactions on their knowledge of RG practices.

How were data collected and analyzed?

Recruitment. We recruited and analyzed data from patrons (N=303) who visited one of the three casinos in Massachusetts and who recently had an exchange or demonstration with a GameSense Advisor (GSA). An exchange interaction is a two-way communication with a GSA about RG or problem gaming (i.e., a discussion about how games work or local treatment support), whereas a demonstration interaction involves a longer communication from a GSA about how a game, RG tool, or concept works (i.e., engagement centred around showing, for example, the independence of slot machine plays or showing the player how to use the program's kiosk). These interactions were chosen because they involve in-depth discussions about RG and GameSense services. By focusing on this subset of patrons, we ensured that our data collection captured patrons actively seeking RG education and support, thus providing valuable insights into user engagement and its predictors. This recruitment strategy allowed us to explore the motivations and outcomes of these interactions and their implications for RG practices within the casino environment.

What did we find?

Understanding why patrons interacted with a GSA: Patron interactions with GSAs revealed multifaceted motivations. The highest proportion of respondents (74.7%, $n = 219$) engaged with GSAs to obtain promotional items and swag. This extrinsic motivation suggests that incentives play a vital role in driving interactions. However, a similar high proportion of respondents expressed interacting with a GSA to learn about RG (72%, $n = 211$), suggesting that there is prevention utility in having GSAs present at the casinos in Massachusetts. From an intervention perspective, approximately half of all respondents noted that they interacted with a GSA about supports for problem gambling (53.6%, $n = 157$), and 43.3% ($n = 127$) noted interacting with a GSA about voluntary self-exclusion. Thus, GSAs appear to be having meaningful conversations with patrons about both prevention (i.e., RG) and intervention (i.e., disordered gambling).

We used Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to explore the underlying patterns of motivations driving patrons to interact with GSAs. Three distinct groups were identified. Group 1 consisted of 108 patrons who endorsed all reasons to interact with an advisor (both about responsible gambling and disordered gambling. Consequently, we labelled members of this group "All Information Seekers". Group 2 consisted of 102 patrons who mostly endorsed interacting with a GSA to learn about RG, including 60% who wanted to learn about PlayMyWay. Consequently, we labelled members of this group "RG Curious". Group 3 consisted of 83 patrons. Most respondents in this group endorsed that they were asked to by an advisor (81.1%). Additionally, a large proportion (71.4%) of this group endorsed wanting to get free giveaways or swag. They

also expressed a relative lack of impetus to interact with a GSA to learn about RG (23.3% endorsement) or learn about support for problem gambling (10% endorsement). Thus, we labelled this third group of patrons as "Externally Inspired".

Of note, we observed differences in age and Gambling Literacy across these groups. Patrons classified as Externally Inspired were older than patrons classified as either All Information Seekers or RG Curious. There was not an age difference between those classified as All Information Seekers and RG Curious. Additionally, we found that Gambling Literacy was lower among patrons classified as All Information Seekers than patrons classified as RG Curious or as Externally Inspired. All Information Seekers were also comprised of respondents who expressed the highest endorsement of RG-related reasons for interacting with a GSA. This suggests that patrons in this group may know they are low in Gambling Literacy and have a desire to become more gambling literate by way of interacting with a GSA.

Perceived Outcomes of Interactions: Patron interactions with GSAs overwhelmingly yielded positive outcomes. A significant proportion (74.2%, $n = 287$) reported feeling more informed about RG practices, indicating the effectiveness of GSA interactions in imparting knowledge. Additionally, over three-quarters (78.8%, $n = 283$) reported that they would engage others to speak to a GSA.

Notably, All Information Seekers and RG Curious patrons reported more positive outcomes of interacting with a GSA than those who are Externally Inspired. These results suggest that people who are intrinsically motivated to learn about RG by interacting with a GSA may be getting more out of the interaction in terms of RG knowledge than those who are extrinsically motivated (e.g., for swag) to interact with a GSA. Swag may bring some people to interact with GSAs about RG and/or supports for disordered gambling but the interactions that follow may not have as meaningful an outcome as interactions motivated by a patron's desire to learn from GSAs. That said, it could plant the seed for future interactions that yield more positive outcomes.

Perceived Purpose and Target Audience of GameSense: The study revealed patrons had reasonably accurate perceptions of GameSense's purpose and target audience. Notably, 93.5% ($n = 277$) of respondents correctly recognized GameSense as a resource for RG education, and 93.5% ($n = 277$) correctly understood GameSense provides support for gambling-related issues. Surprisingly, 69.5% ($n = 275$) of patrons perceived GameSense as a lounge, indicating the potential for GameSense Information Centers (GSICs) to serve as spaces for players to take a break from play (a known RG strategy). Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the dynamics of patron-GSA interactions within the GameSense program and offer a foundation for recommendations to enhance RG education and support services.

What are some take home messages?

The results suggest that patrons benefit from interacting with GSAs. The current results also point to a need for all GameSense stakeholders (GSAs in particular) to understand patrons have diverse motivations for engaging with GameSense. Different strategies may be required to engage the full spectrum of patrons.

What do we recommend?

1. **Clarify Program Messaging:** Invest in refining and reinforcing GameSense messaging to communicate that it is a resource for all casino patrons, not just for patrons with gambling problems.
2. **Tailored Engagement Strategies:** Develop strategies that cater to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, emphasizing interactive discussions for those seeking RG education and incentives for a broader audience.
3. **Proactive GSA Outreach:** Encourage GSAs to initiate conversations strategically, even with patrons who may not actively seek assistance.
4. **Referral Program:** Implement a referral program to reward patrons for referring others to GameSense.
5. **Target patrons who do not have a gambling problem:** Develop strategies to motivate patrons who do not have gambling problems to have meaningful interactions with GSAs.
6. **Continuous Training and Development:** Invest in ongoing training for GSAs to adapt to patrons' diverse motivations effectively.

What have we learned?

This evaluation highlights the benefits of having patrons interacting with a GSA. It also highlights the different motivations patrons have for interacting with a GSA. Understanding why people use GameSense and how it helps them is crucial for improving the program and promoting RG among the broad audience visiting casinos in Massachusetts.

1. Introduction

Recently, Wohl and colleagues (2024) conducted a survey of players from the three casinos in Massachusetts to assess awareness of, and engagement with, the GameSense responsible gambling (RG) program. Although most players were aware of GameSense (73.1%), a substantially lower proportion (16.3%) reported having an interaction with a GameSense Advisor (GSA). Additionally, akin to Gray and colleagues (2020), the nature of the interaction for the vast majority of players who interacted with a GSA (>70%) was classified as a simple interaction (i.e., a short, communication from a GSA about issues unrelated to gaming). Thus, despite interacting with a GSA, a limited number of participants directly engaged with the GameSense to learn about RG. Consequently, prior work was limited in its ability to draw insights about the utility of interacting with a GSA. More useful would be an assessment of players who have had a meaningful interaction with a GSA about RG and/or support services.

To gain insights about the effect interacting with a GSA about gambling-related issues has on players, players who have had an exchange or demonstration interaction need to be assessed. Put differently, conclusions about player's perceptions of GameSense that are drawn from samples in which the majority of participants did not have an interaction with a GSA about gambling-related issues should be considered tentative, at best.

2. Overview of Current Research

To get a better understanding of the factors that lead patrons to have these meaningful interactions with GSAs (i.e., interactions about gambling-related issues), we conducted a survey of patrons who had recently had an interaction with a GSA about RG or problematic gambling. Specifically, in the current study, we recruited patrons who had a demonstration or exchange interaction with a GSA. Demonstration interactions are meant to equip patrons with valuable

1

insights into RG strategies and the effective utilization of tools tailored to enhance their gaming experiences while curbing potential risks. In a similar vein, exchange interactions provide patrons with an opportunity to partake in more profound discussions, seek personalized guidance, and cultivate a deeper understanding of their own behaviors and available options.

The decision to exclusively recruit patrons who had a demonstration or exchange interaction with a GSA is rooted in the aim of delving into meaningful, informative interactions that directly pertain to RG and GameSense services. By focusing solely on these interaction types, we could better capture a sample of patrons who actively pursued in-depth engagement, showcasing a genuine interest in comprehending RG principles and strategies for mitigating problem gambling. This selection criterion aligns with the study's overarching objective of uncovering predictive factors for robust engagement with both GameSense and RG education. That is, by concentrating solely on patrons who engaged in these meaningful interactions about RG or problematic gambling, the study not only guarantees a dataset that is pertinent but also acknowledges the importance of more profound interactions that are more likely to yield comprehensive insights into the intricate interplay of factors that shape user decisions and behaviors pertaining to RG.

Furthermore, our decision to omit patrons who had simple interactions with a GSA (i.e., short interactions with a GSA about issues unrelated to gambling) stems from the understanding that these interactions primarily encompass brief communications unrelated to RG or the core objectives of GameSense. By excluding simple interactions, the current study focuses exclusively on interaction types that align with the study's primary goals and carry the potential to provide meaningful, actionable insights into the factors that motivate patrons to actively engage with GameSense and RG education.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to examine the reasons driving patrons to initiate a meaningful interaction with a GSA. Understanding the factors that prompt patrons to seek assistance from GSAs is essential for enhancing RG education and support services. By assessing these reasons, we aimed to better understand the motivations, concerns, and interests that lead patrons to engage in meaningful discussions about RG practices. Moreover, we explored whether these interactions foster a heightened sense of understanding among patrons. Determining whether patrons feel more informed about RG subsequent to their interactions is a crucial indicator of the effectiveness of these engagements. This assessment aligns with our commitment to evaluating the tangible impact of GSAs on patrons' knowledge and awareness of RG principles.

We also examined potential differences between participants who had demonstration interactions and those who engaged in exchange interactions. This comparative analysis served to illuminate whether the nature of the interaction—demonstration or exchange—has any bearing on the outcomes and perceptions of the participants. We acknowledge that such differences may be influenced by various factors, including the depth of engagement, the individualized guidance offered in exchange interactions, and the degree of clarity provided in demonstration interactions. By exploring these potential differences, we aimed to better understand whether one interaction type holds an advantage over the other in terms of promoting understanding and fostering engagement with RG. In cases where differences arise, we considered underlying factors and contexts that could contribute to the observed variations, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the diverse pathways through which patrons engage with GSAs and subsequently grasp RG concepts.

3. Methods and Results

3.1 Method and Results Structure

The analysis proceeded in three main stages: Sample characteristics, possible correlates of awareness and engagement with GameSense, and evaluation of GameSense. In the first stage, we present descriptive information about the sample. Descriptive information included information about the age and gender composition of the sample. In the second stage, we present the measured variables we included in the study, which were factors such as disordered gambling symptomatology, positive play beliefs and behaviors, as well as the frequency within which respondents report visiting casinos in Massachusetts.

In the third stage, we evaluated knowledge about GameSense among patrons who had a demonstration or an exchange interaction with a GSA. Specifically, we assessed the perceived purpose of GameSense and the perceived target audience of GameSense. Thereafter, they were asked specific questions about their interaction with a GSA. For instance, we asked respondents why they interacted with a GSA. We also assessed whether there were any statistically significant differences between those who had an Exchange interaction and those who had a Demonstration interaction on our measured variables. A similar comparison was made based on whether respondent or GSA initiated the interaction.

To determine whether there were distinct groups of patrons who have specific reasons to interact with a GSA, we conducted Latent Class Analysis (LCA). A LCA is a statistical technique used to identify groups (called 'classes') within a sample base on observed (measured) variables. LCA was employed for several reasons. Firstly, it allows for the identification of distinct subgroups within a population, offering a more nuanced understanding. For example, we tested whether the reasons why people interacted with a GSA can be meaningfully clustered or

grouped together. It also allows us to examine whether measured variables differed between any groups, providing insights into distinct patterns and associations. Specifically, we assessed whether observed groups differ in terms of disordered gambling symptomatology, positive play, and/or frequency of visits, as well as whether group membership was associated with the type of interaction patrons had with a GSA. This approach allowed for a systematic and informative examination of the relationships and associations of interest in the context of the study. A detailed description of model selection is provided in Appendix A.

Lastly, we assessed the perceived outcome of interacting with a GSA. Specifically, we assessed the extent to which respondents felt more informed about RG and whether they will encourage others to speak with a GSA because of their interaction. We also assessed whether perceived outcome varied by the type of interaction they had (Exchange or Demonstration) and group membership.

3.2 Recruitment

For this study, GSAs who had just provided a demonstration or had an exchange with a patron at one of the three casinos in Massachusetts asked the patron if they would participate in a study on "the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors". As compensation for their time, they were told they would receive their choice of a US$10 Amazon.com or Dunkin Donuts gift card. Those who expressed interest were given a business card with a QR code, which directed them to an online consent form. Those who granted consent were given access to the online survey (see Appendix D for the survey).

The study was launched on March 24, 2023 and closed on July 21, 2023.

3.3 Sample Characteristics

A total of 2,456 unique patrons were informed about the study at the three casinos in Massachusetts. Of these patrons, 1,987 accepted the invitation by taking the business card with the QR code to access the survey. Of those who accepted the business card, 440 patrons accessed the consent form by using the QR code. Two respondents did not consent after reaching the consent form, 121 did not pass eligibility criteria (i.e., they were either not at least 21 years old, were not invited by a GSA, did not have an interaction with a GSA, or had not had a demonstration or an exchange), and six respondents consented to participate but did not provide responses to the survey questions. Additionally, two responses were identified as duplicates (based on the email address they provided to receive compensation) and were consequently removed. One respondent identified their gender as a "dog". After the research team discussed this individual and the fidelity of the data they provided, we decided to remove this individual from the data. Thus, analyses were conducted on a final sample of 303 patrons (M_{age} = 47.98, SD = 16.02). A detailed overview of patron's demographic characteristics is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	n	*%*
Age		
21-24	16	5.3
25-34	41	13.5
35-44	52	17.2
45-54	47	15.5
55-64	47	15.5
65+	48	15.8
Did not indicate	52	17.2
Gender		
Man	100	33
Woman	136	44.9
Other	6	2

| *Did not indicate* | 61 | 20.2 |

3.4 Possible correlates of awareness and engagement with GameSense

The following variables were included to assess whether they are associated with awareness, perceptions of GameSense, and engagement with the program.

3.4.1. Disordered Gambling Symptomology. Disordered gambling symptomology was assessed using the nine-item Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI; see Ferris & Wynne, 2001). The PGSI assesses problem gambling behaviors (e.g., "How often have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?") as well as the consequences of problem gambling (e.g., "How often has your gaming caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?"). Response options were anchored at 0 *(never)* to 3 *(always)*. Respondents' total PGSI scores were the sum of the nine items ($\alpha = .95$). Degrees of risk have been established based on scores on the PGSI, with those scoring 0 considered to have no gambling problems, those scoring 1 or 2 considered to be "low risk", those scoring 3 to 7 considered to be "moderate risk", and those scoring more than 7 as "problem gamblers".

A total of 58 patrons (19.1%) were categorized as a non-problem gambler, 67 (22.1%) as low-risk, 57 (18.8%) as moderate-risk, and 78 (25.7%) as a problem gambler. A risk category could not be calculated for 43 patrons (14.2%) due to missing data. Additionally, as noted in Table 3, mean levels of disordered gambling symptomatology ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 6.28$) places the sample as a whole in the middle of the "moderate risk" category. Given that we recruited only regular gamblers, this level of disordered gambling symptomatology is not unexpected. Increased frequency of gambling is known to be strongly associated with gambling-related problems (Young et al., 2022).

3.4.2 Positive Play. We used the Positive Play Scale (Wood et al., 2017) to assess the extent to which respondents were aware of gambling myths and fallacies (i.e., gambling literacy), assumed personal responsibility for their play behavior, were honest with family members and in control of their gambling, and set limits on their play. The Gambling Literacy subscale included three items (α = .67; e.g., "Gambling is not a good way to make money"). The Personal Responsibility subscale included four items (α = .93; e.g., "I should be able to walk away from gambling at any time"). These belief subscales were anchored at 1 *(strongly disagree)* and 7 *(strongly agree).* The third subscale was comprised of three items (α = .88) that measured the extent to which the participant was in control of and honest about their gambling (e.g., "In the last month I felt in control of my gambling behavior"). The fourth subscale consisted of four items (α = .93) designed to measure the player's Pre-Commitment (e.g., "I considered the amount of time I was willing to spend before I gambled"). Response options for the behavior subscales were anchored at 1 *(never)* and 7 *(always).*

Mean scores were calculated for each subscale (and reported in Table 3), with higher scores representing higher endorsement of positive play beliefs and behaviors. Scores on all subscales were relatively similar, with means ranging from 5.24 (Gambling Literacy) to 6.08 (Personal Responsibility) indicating high levels of both positive play beliefs and behavior. Yet, there is also opportunity for improvement.

3.4.3. Frequency of casino gambling in Massachusetts. Respondents were asked what proportion of their overall gambling took place in the Massachusetts casino through which they were contacted in 25% increments. Results showed that 19.8% reported "100%", 17.8% reported "about 75%", 18.2% reported "about 50%", 26.4% reported "about 25%", and 7.9% reported "0%".

We also asked respondents to estimate what proportion of their play at the casino involved the following games: slot machines, table games, video table games, and lottery. See Table 2 for a summary of these results.

Table 2

Proportion of Play on Different Games per Visit

In the last 3 months, when you visited this casino, how often did you play:	0%	about 25%	about 50%	about 75%	100%
Slot machines	12.8	19.3	12.8	14.2	40.0
Table games	48.9	18.1	9.6	11.2	12.3
Video table games	67.1	16.7	6.0	5.2	5.2
Sports betting	74.1	17.3	4.3	2.0	2.4
Lottery	68.6	20.4	5.1	2.8	3.1

Note. Ns range from 252 to 274 due to non-response. Percentages based on number responding to a particular game.

3.4.4 Association among measured variables. As observed in previous work (see Wood et al., 2017), disordered gambling symptomatology was significantly negatively associated with all four positive play subscales (i.e., Gambling Literacy, Pre-commitment, Honesty & Control, and Personal Responsibility). Additionally, there was a small, yet statistically significant, positive association between disordered gambling symptomatology and frequency of visiting a casino in Massachusetts. Interestingly, there was also a statistically significant positive, yet small, association between frequency of visiting and three of the four positive play subscales. The association between frequency of visiting the casino and Gambling Literacy was not statistically significant. These results suggest that whilst some patrons who are frequent gamblers may have symptoms of disordered gambling, other patrons are both frequent and responsible gamblers.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between the Measured Variables

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Disordered Gambling Symptomatology	5.39	6.28	-	-	-	-	-
2. Personal Responsibility	6.07	1.19	-.24**	-	-	-	-
3. Gambling Literacy	5.23	1.41	-.44**	.25**	-	-	-
4. Honesty & Control	5.55	1.60	-.30**	.42**	.12	-	-
5. Pre-Commitment	5.59	1.56	-.37**	.43**	.16**	.80**	-
6. Frequency of visits to the casino	3.17	1.30	.17**	.20**	-.05	.24**	.19**

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$. All estimates were calculated using pairwise deletion. Thus, sample size for the estimates ranged from 260 to 273.

4. Assessment of GameSense

In this section, we report the results of patrons' knowledge about GameSense after having a meaningful interaction with a GSA.

4.1 Perceptions of GameSense

4.1.1 Perceived Purpose of GameSense. Respondents were provided eight items that assessed the perceived purpose of GameSense. These items are listed in Table 4. We slightly adapted the version of this scale from the one used in the General Players Survey and Employee Survey. Specifically, we removed the incorrect response option ("It offers a place where players can bet on sports") and replaced it with an additional correct response option ("It's a program that educates players about the odds of winning at a particular game and the house edge of that game"). We made this change to fully capture the purpose of GameSense. Once again, we also asked whether GameSense "offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor". Although initially included as an incorrect purpose, following data collection we learned that patrons may be using GameSense Information Centers (GSIC)s to take a break from the gaming floor (a known RG strategy). Because it was not known whether patrons were using it in such a manner, we ultimately coded this item as neither correct nor incorrect.

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Results showed that most respondents correctly indicated that GameSense provided RG tools (i.e., PlayMyWay; 93.8%), helped educate patrons about RG (93.5%), and offered supports for those who develop gambling related problems (93.1%). Just over two-thirds of respondents indicated that the purpose of GameSense is a lounge (69.5%).

Of note, there was a high level of endorsement of the (seven) correct purposes of GameSense we provided respondents (range: 73.7%-93.8%; see Table 4). The items that asked whether GameSense is a lounge was not included in current analysis. Nonetheless, it is of interest that 69.5% of respondents believed that the GSIC was a lounge to help them get away from the gaming floor. A known RG strategy is for players to take a break in play. Although not an expressed purpose of the seats located in a GSIC, if players are using it to get away from the gaming floor this may be an unintended benefit of having a space for players to relax within a GSIC. It may also provide an opportunity for GSAs to engage the patron about RG and/or disordered gambling.

Table 4

Purposes of GameSense

Purposes:	% agreement
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay	93.8
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly	93.5
It offers a place where players can find where to get support if they believe their gaming has become problematic	93.1
It's a program that educates players about how games work	86.7

It's a program that educates players about the odds of winning at a particular game and the house edge of that game	78.7
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts	85.8
It's a program that helps dispel gaming-related myths	84.1
It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge)*	69.5

Note. * not scored as correct or incorrect. Sample size for each item is the total number of participants who provided a response.

4.1.2 Perceived target audience for GameSense. All respondents read the following brief description of the program:

> GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy. GameSense Advisors work at a GameSense Info Center located at MGM Springfield/Encore Boston Harbor/Plainridge Park Casino. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the areas of responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for help. Many GameSense Advisors come to the position with professional gaming experience which is useful in understanding patrons' needs.

They were then asked to respond to six items that assessed the perceived target audience for GameSense. These items, together with their means (on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = *"strongly disagree"* and 7 = *"strongly agree"*) and the percentage agreeing (i.e., > than the "neutral" midpoint) are provided in Table 5. Although most respondents (86.1%) agreed that GameSense was created for people who gamble on a regular basis, a relatively lower proportion of respondents (74.0%) believed GameSense is for people who gamble occasionally. Relatedly, just over two-thirds of all respondents believed that GameSense was self-relevant (71.0%).

Table 5

Perceived Target Audience for GameSense

Sources:	Mean (*SD*)	% agreement
People who gamble on a regular basis.	5.69 (1.38)	86.1
People who have trouble controlling their gaming.	5.86 (1.52)	82.2
All people who gamble.	5.62 (1.40)	81.5
People who gamble occasionally.	5.16 (1.54)	74.0
People who are new to gambling.	5.30 (1.56)	73.6
GameSense, and the responsible gaming education and tools it provides, was developed for players like me.	5.18 (1.56)	71.0

Note. Sample size for each item corresponds to the number of participants that provided a response. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agreeing". Percent agreement was based on responses of 5 or higher on the scale.

4.2 Interaction with a GSA

All respondents either had a demonstration or an exchange with a GSA. Respondents were asked "What was the nature of the interaction with a GSA that led you to be invited to complete this survey?". One hundred and sixty-one (53.1%) indicated they had a demonstration and 142 (46.9%) said they had an exchange.

Respondents were then asked whether it was themselves or the GSA who initiated the interaction. One hundred and fifty-three (50.5%) said they initiated the interaction, while 149 (49.2%) said the interaction was initiated by the GSA. One person did not respond to this question. To assess whether there was a relation between who initiated the interaction and what type of interaction patrons had, we conducted a chi-square test. We found that exchanges were more likely to be initiated by GSAs (55.6%) than players (44.4%), whereas demonstrations were more likely to be initiated by players (56.3%) than GSAs (43.7%; $\chi^2(1) = 4.25$, $p = .039$).

Respondents were then asked where this interaction took place (i.e., on the gaming floor, at the GSIC, or at other places around the casino such as the food court). One person did not answer this question. Among the 302 patrons who responded to this question, 92 (30.5%) said

the interaction took place on the gaming floor, 207 (68.5%) said the interaction happened at the

GSIC, and three (1.0%) said the interaction took place at other areas of the casino. To assess

whether there was a relation between who initiated the interaction and where the interaction took

place, a chi-square test was conducted. In this analysis, we excluded the three participants who

said the interaction to place at other parts of the casino from this analysis. Results were not

statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 2.88$, $p = .09$.

Next, respondents were asked their reasons for interacting with a GSA. The eleven

response options are listed in Table 6, along with the percentage of the 293 respondents who

endorsed at least one response. Most respondents interacted with a GSA to obtain swag (74.7%)

or because a GSA initiated a conversation with them (70.6%). However, a similarly high

proportion of respondents were motivated to interact with a GSA to learn about RG (72.0%).

GSAs also appear to be successful at engaging people about disordered gambling in that nearly

half of all patrons (43.3%) who interacted with a GSA indicated they interacted with a GSA to

learn about voluntary self-exclusion.

Table 6

Reasons for Interacting with a GSA

Reason	% agreement	*n*
I wanted to get free giveaways or swag.	74.7	219
I wanted to learn about RG.	72.0	211
A GSA initiated a conversation with me.	70.6	207
I wanted to learn about how games work.	69.6	204
I was curious because of the advertisements I saw/announcement I heard about GameSense.	68.9	202
I wanted to be better informed should I need to pass information to other players.	66.2	194
I wanted to learn about gambling-related myths.	62.8	184

I wanted to learn about PlayMyWay.	62.1	182
I wanted to learn about supports for problem gambling.	53.6	157
I wanted to learn about voluntary self-exclusion.	43.3	127
I wanted help enrolling in PlayMyWay.	40.3	118

Note. Of the total sample, 293 endorsed at least one response. Sample sizes refer to the total number of participants who responded for each item. . Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents could list more than one reason.

Lastly, we assessed whether respondents who had a demonstration interaction with a GSA differed from those who had an exchange interaction on any of the measured variables We found that respondents who had a demonstration ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.30$) scored significantly higher on Gambling Literacy than those who had an exchange with a GSA ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.48$), $t(263) = 2.05$, $p = .041$, $d = .25$,. There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the other measured variables. Full results are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Comparison of Patrons Who Had a Demonstration vs. an Exchange on Sample Characteristics

Measure	Demonstration			Exchange			*t*	*df*	*p*	*d*	95% CI
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*					
Disordered gambling symptomatology	137	4.91	6.12	123	5.94	6.43	-1.32	258	.19	-.16	[-.41, .08]
Personal Responsibility	141	6.04	1.30	126	6.12	1.03	-.54	265	.59	-.07	[-.31, .17]
Gambling Literacy	141	5.40	1.30	124	5.05	1.48	2.05	263	.04*	.25	[.01, .50]
Honesty and Control	137	5.55	1.62	127	5.55	1.59	.01	262	.99	.001	[-.24, .24]
Pre-Commitment	137	5.74	1.45	126	5.43	1.64	1.65	261	.10	.20	[-.04, .45]
Frequency of visits to the casino	146	3.08	1.33	127	3.28	1.27	-1.27	271	.21	-.15	[-.39, .09]

Note. * $p < .05$. Sample sizes vary due to missing data/non-responses.

We then assessed whether respondents differed on any of the measured variables based on whether the patron or the GSA initiated the interaction. We found that patrons who initiated

the interaction with a GSA were more likely to pre-commit to a time or money limit when gambling than were those who had an interaction that was initiated by a GSA. We also found that respondents who initiated the interaction attended the casino with greater frequency than respondents who had an interaction that was initiated by a GSA. There were no significant differences between the two groups on any of the other sample characteristics (see Table 8).

Table 8

Comparison of Patrons Who Initiated the Interaction vs. Interactions Initiated by the GSA on

Sample Characteristics

	Patron Initiated			GSA Initiated							
Measure	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	t	df	p	d	95% CI
Disordered gambling symptomatology	129	4.98	6.38	131	5.80	6.17	-1.06	258	.29	-.13	[-.38, .11]
Personal responsibility	133	6.10	1.26	134	6.06	1.10	.276	265	.78	.03	[-.21, .27]
Gambling literacy	133	5.37	1.36	132	5.11	1.42	1.50	263	.13	.19	[-.06, .43]
Honesty and control	133	5.72	1.58	131	5.38	1.61	1.72	262	.09	.21	[-.03, .45]
Pre-commitment	132	5.78	1.51	131	5.40	1.58	2.04	261	.04*	.25	[.009, .50]
Frequency of visits to the casino	136	3.33	1.34	137	3.01	1.25	2.06	271	.04*	.25	[.01, .49]

Note. * $p < .05$. Sample sizes vary due to missing data/non-responses.

4.2.1 Latent Class Analysis on reasons for interacting with a GSA. To determine

whether there were distinct groups of patrons who have specific reasons to interact with a GSA,

we conducted an LCA. The LCA looks for common response patterns in a sample. Three groups

emerged from the analysis (see Appendix A for details; see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Results of the Latent Class Analysis Examining Reasons for Interacting with a GSA

A GameSense Advisor initiated a conversation with me

I was curious because of advertisements I saw/announcement I heard about GameSense

I wanted to learn about how games work

I wanted to learn about responsible gambling (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit)

I wanted to learn about PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card)

I wanted help enrolling in PlayMyWay

I wanted to get free giveaways or swag (e.g., a lanyard)

I wanted to learn about gambling-related myths

I wanted to learn about supports for problem gambling

I wanted to be better informed should I need to pass information to other players

I wanted to learn about voluntary self-exclusion

—— All Information Seekers (n = 108)   – – Reponsible Gambling Curious (n = 102)   •••••• Externally Inspired (n = 83)

As seen in Table 9, Group 1 consisted of 108 patrons who endorsed all reasons to interact with a GSA. Consequently, we labelled members of this group "All Information Seekers". Group 2 consisted of 102 patrons who mostly endorsed interacting with a GSA to learn about RG, including 60% who wanted to learn about PlayMyWay. Consequently, we labelled members of this group "RG Curious". Group 3 consisted of 83 patrons. Most respondents in this group endorsed that they were asked to by a GSA (81.1%). Additionally, a large proportion (71.4%) of this group endorsed wanting to get free giveaways or swag. They also expressed a relative lack a desire to interact with a GSA to learn about RG (23.3% endorsement), PlayMyWay (27.0% endorsement), gambling-related myths (27.6% endorsement), problem gambling (10.0%

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endorsement) or voluntary self-exclusion (3.8% endorsement). Thus, we labelled this third group

of patrons as "Externally Inspired" to interact with a GSA.

Table 9

Proportion Who Affirmed Each Reason for Interacting with a GSA by LCA Group Membership

Reason for interacting with a GSA	All Information Seekers (n = 108)	RG Curious (n = 102)	Externally Inspired (n = 83)
I wanted to learn about responsible gambling (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit).	.98	.96	.23
I wanted to be better informed should I need to pass information to other players	.95	.81	.27
I wanted to learn about how games work	.96	.73	.39
I was curious because of advertisements I saw/announcement I heard about GameSense	.97	.73	.41
I wanted to learn about gambling-related myths	.96	.67	.28
I wanted to learn about supports for problem gambling	.92	.62	.10
A GameSense Advisor initiated a conversation with me	.93	.61	.71
I wanted to learn about PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card).	1.00	.60	.27
I wanted to get free giveaways or swag (e.g., a lanyard).	.97	.53	.88
I wanted to learn about voluntary self-exclusion	.82	.47	.04
I wanted help enrolling in PlayMyWay	.92	.16	.14

To examine whether there was a relation between the type of interaction patrons had with

a GSA (i.e., demonstration or exchange) and the three groups that emerged from the LCA, we

conducted a chi-square test. This test was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 8.33$, $p = .016$. There

was no difference in the proportion of patrons that were Externally Inspired in terms of whether

they had a demonstration (27.7%) or exchange (29.0%). However, RG Curious patrons were

more likely to have had an exchange (42.0%) versus a demonstration (28.4%), whereas All

Information Seekers patrons were more likely to have a demonstration (43.9%) versus an

exchange interaction (29.0%). More research is needed to understand why this may be the case

(or whether this is a spurious finding).

We then conducted another chi-square test to examine the relation between group

membership and gender. The test was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 1.30$, $p = .52$.

To examine the relation between age and the three groups that emerged from LCA, we

conducted an ANOVA with the group variable derived from the LCA as the independent

variable and age as the dependent variable. There was an overall difference in age as a function

of group, $F(2, 250) = 4.79$, $p = .009$. Simple effects showed that patrons classified as Externally

Inspired ($M = 52.89$, $SD = 13.15$) were older than patrons classified as either RG Curious ($M =$

45.56, $SD = 16.21$) or All Information Seekers ($M = 46.55$, $SD = 17.11$). Also, patrons classified

as either RG Curious or All Information Seekers did not differ statistically in terms of age.

Additionally, we found between (LCA) group differences on Gambling Literacy $F(2,$

264) $= 10.01$, $p < .001$. Gambling Literacy was lower among patrons classified as All

Information Seekers ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.44$) than patrons classified as RG Curious ($M = 5.42$, SD

$= 1.41$) or as Externally Inspired ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.15$). Interestingly, the All Information

Seekers were also comprised of patrons who expressed the highest endorsement of RG-related

reasons for interacting with a GSA. This suggests that patrons in this group may know they are

low in Gambling Literacy and have a desire to become more gambling literate by way of

interacting with a GSA. There were no statistically significant differences between groups on the

other positive play subscales (i.e., Personal Responsibility, Honesty and Control, and Pre-

Commitment).

4.3 Perceived Outcome of Interacting with a GSA

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that their interactions with a GSA made them feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly, how games worked, and that their interests were served using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *"strongly disagree"* to 7 *"strongly agree"*). They were also asked whether they would encourage others to speak with a GSA or visit a GSIC. As seen in Table 10, responses were positive (in fact, more positive than what was observed among the regular players surveyed for the General Players Survey). The majority of patrons indicated that due to their interaction with a GSA, they would encourage others to visit a GSIC (81.3%) or speak with a GSA (78.8%).

Table 10

Perceived Outcome of Interacting with a GSA

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor:	*M* (*SD*)	% agreement	*n*
I would encourage others to visit a GSIC.	5.71 (1.61)	81.3	283
I would encourage others to speak with a GSA.	5.64 (1.70)	78.8	283
I feel that my best interests are effectively served.	5.50 (1.60)	75.4	284
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly.	5.35 (1.81)	74.2	287
I feel more informed about how games work.	5.38 (1.63)	73.0	285

Note. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

Next, we then compared those who reported having a demonstration interaction with those who reported an exchange interaction on perceived outcomes of their interaction. There were no significant differences between the two groups on any of the items. Full results can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Between Groups Interaction Type Comparison on Perceived Outcome of Interacting with a GSA

Due to my experience with a GSA:	Demonstration			Exchange			*t*	*df*	*p*	*d*	95% CI
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*					
I feel more informed about responsible gaming	152	5.15	1.90	135	5.57	1.68	-1.97	285	.05	-.23	[-.47, .00]
I feel more informed about how gaming games work	151	5.34	1.65	134	5.43	1.62	-.42	283	.68	-.05	[-.28, .18]
I feel my best interests are effectively served	149	5.38	1.69	135	5.64	1.48	-1.42	282	.16	-.17	[-.40, .07]
I would encourage customers to speak with a GSA	148	5.53	1.75	135	5.77	1.65	-1.20	281	.23	-.43	[-.38, .09]
I would encourage customers to visit a GSIC	148	5.59	1.72	135	5.84	1.47	-1.30	281	.19	-.16	[-.39, .08]

Note. Sample sizes vary due to missing data/non-responses.

Lastly, five separate ANOVAs (one for each item) were conducted to examine whether there is a relation between LCA group membership and the perceived outcome of patrons' interaction with a GSA (see Table 12). The least significant difference method was used to probe omnibus differences identified by the ANOVAs. Patrons classified as RG Curious and as All Information Seekers reported more positive outcomes of interacting with a GSA than those classified as Externally Inspired on all items (see Appendix C). Thus, people who are intrinsically motivated to learn about RG by interacting with a GSA (i.e., All Information Seekers and RG Curious) get more out of the interaction in terms of RG knowledge and are more apt to refer other players to GSAs than those who are extrinsically motivated (e.g., for swag) to interact with a GSA (i.e., Externally Inspired).

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations of Perceived Outcome of Interacting with a GSA

Dependent variable	Group	n	M	SD
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly	1	79	4.72$_a$	1.64
	2	102	5.67$_b$	1.75
	3	106	5.51$_b$	1.88
	Total	287	5.35	1.81
I feel more informed about how gaming games work	1	79	4.75$_a$	1.58
	2	102	5.50$_b$	1.66
	3	104	5.75$_b$	1.52
	Total	285	5.38	1.63
I feel my best interests are effectively served	1	78	5.00$_a$	1.56
	2	102	5.75$_b$	1.51
	3	104	5.63$_b$	1.64
	Total	284	5.50	1.60
I would encourage customers to speak with a GSA	1	78	5.22$_a$	1.73
	2	102	5.89$_b$	1.70
	3	103	5.72$_b$	1.64
	Total	283	5.64	1.70
I would encourage customers to visit a GSIC	1	79	5.35$_a$	1.63
	2	102	6.04$_b$	1.44
	3	102	5.65$_{a,b}$	1.70
	Total	283	5.71	1.61

Note. 1 = Externally Inspired; 2 = RG Gambling Curious; 3 = All Information Seekers. Cells with shared subscripts did not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$); cells with different subscripts differed significantly ($p < .050$).

5. Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the motivations behind patrons'

interactions with GSAs and to assess the impact of these interactions on their perceptions and

knowledge of RG practices and problem gambling supports. Through a comprehensive analysis,

we aimed to shed light on the intricacies of these interactions and provide recommendations for

enhancing the GameSense program. To that end, we recruited patrons at one of the three casinos

in Massachusetts who recently had either an exchange or demonstration interaction with a GSA.

Respondents completed a survey that assessed perceptions of GameSense, including its purpose

and target audience. We also assessed the dynamics of interactions with GSAs, exploring the

reasons behind these interactions and the influence of interaction types.

5.1 Understanding Why Patrons Interact with GSAs

Our investigation uncovered a multifaceted landscape of patron-GSA interactions,

shedding light on the reasons why individuals engage with GSAs. Most patrons interacted with

GSAs to gain RG knowledge or because a GSA initiated a conversation with them about RG. In

addition, a similar proportion of patrons interacted with a GSA to obtain swag or promotional

items (whether this is what drew them into the interaction or was an outcome of an interaction

about RG, for example). These findings indicate that patrons' motivations for interacting with

GSAs encompass both intrinsic desires for RG education and extrinsic incentives like giveaways.

This dual dynamic within the GameSense program has several implications.

Firstly, the coexistence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations highlights the program's

versatility in catering to a diverse range of patron interests. GameSense can use this insight to

structure its interactions effectively, offering RG information to those seeking it while

simultaneously leveraging incentives to encourage interaction among a broader audience. This balance is crucial to maintaining the program's appeal and accessibility.

Secondly, the fact that GSAs initiating conversations played a significant role in patron interactions suggests the importance of proactive GSA outreach. Encouraging GSAs to initiate conversations strategically, even with patrons who may not actively seek assistance, can help expand the program's reach and influence. This approach aligns with the idea that proactive GSA engagement can effectively bridge the gap between patrons' latent interests and their actual engagement with RG information.

We also conducted a LCA to assess whether there are distinct patron groups based on their motivations for interacting with GSAs. Three groups of players were revealed: All Information Seekers, RG Curious, and Externally Inspired. One of the primary takeaways from the LCA is the recognition of diverse motivations driving patrons to seek GSA interactions. The All Information Seekers group exhibited a high propensity to engage with GSAs for various reasons, including RG education and learning about supports for problem gambling. The RG Curious group demonstrated a high desire to learn about RG, moderate inclination toward all other knowledge. The Externally Inspired group tended to interact with GSAs because the GSAs initiated the interaction or because there were giveaways (e.g., swag) present. They did not appear to interact to learn about RG or problematic gambling. This diversity underscores the importance of adopting a multifaceted approach to cater to the varied interests and needs of patrons.

The LCA results emphasize the value of tailoring GSA interactions to patrons' specific motivations. That All Information Seekers group were more likely to have demonstration compared to exchange interactions. More research is needed to understand why this may be the

case (or whether this is a spurious finding). It may suggest that GSAs who notice a patron is keen to learn should lean into this fact and offer them a demonstrate about, among other things, how games work. Those who are RG Curious may benefit from enhanced efforts to educate about RG tools (e.g., PlayMyWay) offered at the casino. The Externally Inspired group patrons largely interacted with a GSA because they were responding to GSA prompts to learn or to get swag, which opened the door for proactive outreach. It may behoove GSA to prob patrons to assess what motivated them to engage with GameSense. Additionally, specific activities could be designed to align with the different patron motive or reasons for engaging with GameSense. Doing so may help maximize the program's effectiveness. For instance, if not already common practice, GSAs should ask patrons who note interest in RG whether they would like to watch a video or have a hand-on demonstration about how games word.

The potentially paradoxical findings regarding Gambling Literacy and the All Information Seekers warrant attention. Despite displaying lower Gambling Literacy, this group exhibited the highest endorsement of RG-related reasons for interacting with a GSA. This suggests that individuals with limited gambling knowledge, but a desire to learn, may actively seek GSA interactions to enhance their understanding. This presents an opportunity for GameSense to bridge the gap by providing accessible, informative, and engaging resources that cater to varying literacy levels. In fact, the LCA results underscore the complexity of patron motivations for engaging with GSAs within the GameSense program. Acknowledging this diversity and tailoring strategies accordingly can lead to more effective RG education and support.

5.2 Perceived Purpose and Target Audience of GameSense

Our investigation into patrons' perceptions of GameSense's purpose and target audience provided valuable insights. Most respondents correctly believed that GameSense provided RG tools, education about responsible gambling, and support for individuals facing gambling-related problems. These findings suggest that patrons have a reasonably accurate understanding of GameSense's core objectives. It should be noted that a substantial proportion viewed GameSense as a lounge; however, a recognized RG strategy involves players taking breaks during play. Although not explicitly designed for this purpose, the seats within a GSIC could offer players a refuge from the gaming floor. This may serve as an unintended advantage, allowing patrons to unwind. Additionally, it presents an opportunity for GSAs to initiate conversations with patrons about RG or problematic gambling behaviors. The Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) should consider expanding the footprint of GSIC at each casino to make an explicit lounge space for patrons.

The perceived target audience for GameSense also yielded noteworthy results. Although the majority believed that GameSense primarily targeted people who gamble on a regular basis, a slightly lower proportion thought it was also for occasional gamblers. These results are in line with prior research (see Forsström et al., 2017; Gainsbury et al., 2018) that suggests a tendency among players to believe that RG initiatives are designed to help intervene when play has become problematic rather than help prevent problems from starting. Messaging that RG programs, like GameSense, are for all people who gamble has always been a challenge. Nonetheless, the MGC should invest funds to determine what messaging works to help properly communicate the purpose of GameSense. Doing so will hopefully increase uptake of the GameSense program in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That over two-thirds felt that

GameSense was self-relevant may suggest that those who interacted with a GSA tended to have elevated symptoms of disordered gambling. Indeed, approximately half of the sample were categorized as being at moderate risk for gambling problems or as likely problem gamblers according to the PGSI, and roughly a quarter of respondents had some symptoms of problem gambling. Moreover, close to half of all respondents indicated that they interacted with a GSA to learn more about voluntary self-exclusion (only a fifth of respondents reported no problems with their gambling). These results suggest that patrons with gambling-related problems are more engaged with GameSense than those without problems. To increase prevention efforts, attention should be directed toward motivating patrons without gambling problems to have meaningful interactions with GSAs.

5.3 Perceived Outcomes of Interactions

One of the central objectives of our study was to assess the perceived outcomes of patron interactions with GSAs. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with most respondents indicating that their interactions left them feeling more informed about RG practices, how casino games work, and that their interests were served. Additionally, a substantial majority expressed their willingness to encourage others to visit a GSIC, speak with a GSA, or both.

However, noteworthy differences emerged based on the type of interaction patrons had. Respondents who engaged in exchange interactions were significantly more likely to agree that they felt more informed about RG compared to those who had demonstration interactions. This finding suggests that interactive discussions with GSAs, where patrons actively engage in two-way conversations about RG, have a more pronounced impact on knowledge acquisition than a demonstration about, for example, how games work.

In summary, our study unraveled the complexities of patron-GSA interactions within the GameSense program, emphasizing the program's adaptability to cater to diverse motivations. The positive perceived outcomes highlight the program's potential to effectively educate patrons about RG practices and influence their behavior positively. Moreover, the alignment between patrons' perceptions and GameSense's objectives regarding purpose and target audience underscores the program's success in conveying its key messages to patrons.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on our findings, we offer several recommendations to the MGC to enhance the GameSense program. These recommendations aim to increase correct perceptions about GameSense, boost the number of patrons who interact with GSAs, and improve the effectiveness of GSA interactions regarding RG education.

Recommendation #1: Clarify and reinforce program messaging. Invest resources in refining and reinforcing the messaging around GameSense. This effort should focus on communicating that GameSense is not solely an intervention program for patrons with gambling problems but also a valuable resource for all casino patrons. Implementing clear, consistent, and persuasive messaging can help dispel misconceptions and encourage broader participation.

Recommendation #2: Tailored engagement strategies. Recognize that patrons have diverse motivations for interacting with GSAs. Develop tailored engagement strategies that cater to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. For patrons seeking RG education, offer engaging and interactive discussions to maximize knowledge acquisition. Simultaneously, incentivize interactions through giveaways and promotions to attract a broader audience. In short, a one-size-fits-all approach will not attract all patrons. In fact, some messaging may be met with

resistance. The results of the current research suggest that patron segmentation is required to meet the RG needs of all patrons, and motivate them to have meaningful interactions with GSAs.

Recommendation #3: Proactive GSA outreach. Encourage GSAs to proactively initiate conversations with patrons, even when patrons may not actively seek assistance. GSA training programs should emphasize the importance of identifying potential candidates for engagement and approaching them in a non-intrusive manner. Proactive outreach can expand the program's reach and impact.

Recommendation #4: Referral program. Leverage patrons' willingness to encourage others to visit GSICs or speak with GSAs. Implement a referral program that rewards patrons for referring their peers to the GameSense program. This can serve as a mutually beneficial initiative, promoting RG while incentivizing engagement.

Recommendation #5: Target patrons who do not have gambling problems. Recognize the potential to motivate patrons who do not have gambling problems to have meaningful interactions with GSAs. Develop strategies to specifically target this group, emphasizing the benefits of RG education, understanding game mechanics, and enhancing the overall casino experience.

Recommendation #6: Continuous training and development. Invest in ongoing training and development for GSAs. Equip them with the skills to adapt to patrons' diverse motivations and effectively convey RG messages. Training should encompass interactive techniques, effective communication, and strategies for proactive outreach.

Recommendation #7: Monitoring and evaluation. Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the impact of these recommendations. Regularly collect feedback

from patrons regarding their interactions with GSAs and the effectiveness of the program's messaging. Use this data to refine strategies and adapt to changing patron dynamics.

5.5 Limitations and Future Directions

Although our study provides valuable insights, some limitations should be noted. First, our findings are based on a specific sample of casino patrons in Massachusetts and may not be entirely representative of all casino-goers. Future research should aim to include a more diverse and comprehensive sample to generalize findings. Second, our study primarily relies on self-report data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability. Future studies could incorporate behavioral observations or additional objective measures to validate the findings. Lastly, as the gaming landscape evolves, it is crucial for the MGC to remain agile and adapt GameSense to changing circumstances and emerging technologies. Regular assessments, updates, and refinements will be essential to ensure that GameSense continues to effectively promote responsible gambling in the ever-evolving casino environment.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations, perceptions, and outcomes of patron interactions with GSAs in Massachusetts casinos. Through a comprehensive analysis, we sought to gain a deeper understanding of RG practices and identify opportunities for enhancing the GameSense program. Our findings have several key takeaways that offer valuable insights into RG education and the GameSense program's effectiveness. We found that patrons interact with GSAs for diverse reasons, encompassing both intrinsic motivations for RG education and extrinsic incentives such as promotional items. This diversity highlights the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to meet the unique needs and interests of different patrons. Furthermore, proactive outreach by GSAs plays a crucial role in driving patron engagement.

Encouraging GSAs to initiate conversations strategically can bridge the gap between latent interests and active participation in RG information. Additionally, it is essential to clarify the messaging around the GameSense program. Ensuring that patrons understand the program's true purpose, extending beyond problem gambling intervention, can help attract a broader audience of individuals interested in RG practices. Lastly, our study underscores the value of interactive education in RG. Two-way discussions between GSAs and patrons significantly impact knowledge acquisition. Therefore, incorporating more conversational and interactive elements into GSA interactions could be a fruitful approach.

In summary, this study not only provides valuable insights into RG practices within the casino environment but also offers concrete recommendations for improving the GameSense program. By understanding the motivations of patrons, enhancing proactive engagement, clarifying messaging, and embracing interactive education, GameSense can continue to empower individuals to gamble responsibly and make informed choices while enjoying their casino experiences.

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Table 14

Model Fit Indices of the LCA

Number of groups	BIC	LMRT p-value	BLRT *p*-value	Entropy	Smallest class size %
2	6999.06	.00	0.000	.84	39.93
3	6932.72	.02	0.000	.80	28.32
4	3569.495	.11	0.000	.79	18.77

Note. BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion; LMRT = Lo-Mendell-Rubin Test; BLRT = Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test.

Appendix B: Associations between group membership and four subscales of PPS

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics

	Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Age	1	70	52.89$_a$	13.15
	2	86	45.56$_b$	16.21
	3	95	46.55$_b$	17.11
	Total	251	47.98	16.02
Personal	1	77	6.31	1.13
Responsibility	2	92	6.05	1.07
	3	98	5.91	1.29
	Total	267	6.06	1.18
Gambling Literacy	1	77	5.62$_a$	1.15
	2	91	5.42$_a$	1.41
	3	97	4.76$_b$	1.44
	Total	265	5.24	1.40
Honesty and	1	76	5.81	1.55
Control	2	91	5.33	1.61
	3	97	5.55	1.62
	Total	264	5.55	1.60
Pre-Commitment	1	76	5.83	1.41
	2	91	5.47	1.49
	3	96	5.52	1.71
	Total	263	5.59	1.55

Note. 1 = Externally Inspired; 2 = Responsible Gambling Curious; 3 = All Information Seekers. Sample sizes vary by analysis due to missing data. Cells with shared subscripts did not differ significantly; cells with different subscripts differed significantly ($p < .05$)

Table 16

ANOVA Results for PPS Subscales

		df	F	p
Personal Responsibility	Between Groups	2	2.48	.086
	Within Groups	264		
	Total	266		
Gambling Literacy	Between Groups	2	10.01	<.001
	Within Groups	262		
	Total	264		
Honesty and Control	Between Groups	2	1.86	.157
	Within Groups	261		
	Total	263		
Pre-Commitment	Between Groups	2	1.26	.286
	Within Groups	260		
	Total	262		

Note. Degrees of freedom vary by analysis due to missing data.

Appendix C: Associations Between Group Membership and Perceived Effect of the

Interaction With a GSA

Table 18

ANOVA Results for Perceived Effects of Interacting With a GSA

Dependent variable		df	F	p
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly	Between Groups	2	7.02	.001
	Within Groups	284		
	Total	286		
I feel more knowledgeable about how games work	Between Groups	2	9.41	<.001
	Within Groups	282		
	Total	284		
I feel that my best interests are effectively served	Between Groups	2	5.66	.004
	Within Groups	281		
	Total	283		
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor	Between Groups	2	3.70	.026
	Within Groups	280		
	Total	282		
I would encourage customers to visit a GameSense Info Center	Between Groups	2	4.23	.015
	Within Groups	280		
	Total	282		

Note. Degrees of freedom vary by analysis due to missing data.

NOTE. The following is the survey provided to patrons who interacted with a GSA at Plainridge Park Casino. The only difference between this survey and the survey provided patrons at the other two casinos was reference to the casino in which they participated.

GameSense: Players-GSA Interaction Survey

Research personnel: The following people are involved in this study, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:

Dr. Michael Wohl (Principal Investigator; michael.wohl@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2908);
Dr. Nassim Tabri (Principal Investigator; nassim.tabri@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 1727);
Dr. Chris Davis (Principal Investigator; chris.davis@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2251);
Gray Gaudett (Other research personnel; GraceGaudett@cmail.carleton.ca);
Isabella Bossom (Other research personnel; isabellabossom@cmail.carleton.ca).

Concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact the Carleton University Ethics Board (ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: We are asking for some input from players who have had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor about GameSense. We are interested in your thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors. We welcome your input.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. It is possible, however, that you could experience some distress when thinking about past or current gambling activities. If you are experiencing problems with your gambling, feel free to call 1.800.327.5050 for treatment options or 1.800.426.1234 for help to exclude yourself from the Massachusetts casinos. A copy of this information will be provided to

you in the debriefing sheet following the questionnaires.

Benefits/Compensation: We are offering a $10 Amazon.com or Dunkin' Donuts Gift Card for completing this online survey, which should take you approximately 10 min. You will be asked to select your gift card at the end of the survey. Your gift card will be emailed to you should you provide us with a valid email address.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The information you provide will be kept confidential. This information will be aggregated with the information collected from other participants and used only for research and knowledge translation purposes. All information collected will be stored securely on Qualtrics' servers located in the United States. Once data from this survey are matched with your player data (if authorized by you), all identifying information will be destroyed (by August 2023). Data will be stored on the lead researcher's secure MS Teams channel dedicated to this project. Because there will be no personal information associated with the data, the dataset will be stored electronically and kept indefinitely. Additionally, we will upload this anonymized dataset to an online data repository called Open Science Framework (http://osf.io/) for research and teaching purposes. Aggregate data may also be used in publications, presentations, and future research. The (fully anonymized) data from this study may be released to journals upon request. Lastly, anonymized data may be shared with trusted colleagues.

Right to withdraw: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer certain questions or to withdraw your data upon completion of the survey. To withdraw your data, please email the researchers. Upon withdrawal, all your information will be permanently deleted. If you would like to withdraw during the study, you may click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of each page. By clicking "withdraw" you will automatically be re-directed to the debriefing page including the links to access support services.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board B (Reference #117682) and is being funded by Massachusetts Gaming Commission. The survey has the support of Plainridge Park Casino.

By checking this box, you agree to the following terms:

○ I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. I understand that I will be compensated with a $10 Amazon.com or Dunkin' Donuts Gift Card for my participation in this study. My participation in this study is voluntary. (1)

○ I do not consent to the study. (2)

I am at least 21 years old.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

I was invited to participate in this survey by a GameSense Advisor.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

I have had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor in the last month.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

What was the nature of the interaction with a GameSense Advisor that led you to be invited to complete this survey?

○ It was a demonstration (i.e., I had a GameSense Advisor show me about how a game, responsible gambling tool, or gambling concept works). (1)

○ I had an exchange with a GameSense Advisor (i.e., I had a conversation with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gambling or problem gambling). (2)

○ Other (e.g., I had a short interaction with a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gambling). (3)

Thank you for your interest in taking the Player-GSA Interaction Survey.

Unfortunately, you do not qualify to complete the survey at this time.

For more information on the Player-GSA Interaction Survey, please contact the Gambling Lab at Carleton University at gambling.lab@carleton.ca

You are being asked to complete this survey because recently you had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor and they invited you to participate in a survey about your experience with them and about GameSense more generally.

Please take a moment to think about the interaction you had with the GameSense Advisor that led you to be invited to complete this survey.

In the next few pages of this survey, we will be asking you some questions about this interaction.

Who initiated your interaction with the GameSense Advisor?

○ Me (1)

○ The GameSense Advisor (2)

l

Where did the interaction take place?

○ On the gaming floor (1)

○ At the GameSense Information Center (2)

○ Other (e.g., food court, the valet, on a bus) (3)

Please indicate your reasons(s) for the interaction with a GameSense Advisor that resulted in your invitation to participate in this survey.

	Yes (1)	No (2)
A GameSense Advisor initiated a conversation with me (1)	○	○
I was curious because of advertisements I saw/announcement I heard about GameSense (2)	○	○
I wanted to learn about how games work. (3)	○	○
I wanted to learn about responsible gambling (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit). (4)	○	○
I wanted to learn about PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card). (5)	○	○
I wanted help enrolling in PlayMyWay (6)	○	○
I wanted to get free giveaways or swag (e.g., a lanyard). (7)	○	○
I wanted to learn about gambling-related myths. (8)	○	○
I wanted to learn about supports for problem gambling. (9)	○	○
I wanted to be better informed should I need to pass information to other players. (10)	○	○
I wanted to learn about voluntary self-exclusion. (11)	○	○
Other (please specify): (12)	○	○

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor…

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more knowledgeable about how games work. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that my best interests are effectively served. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage customers to visit a GameSense Info Center. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Are there other outcomes from your experience with a GameSense Advisor that were not covered in the items above? If so, please briefly note them below.

_____

I am satisfied with my interaction with the GameSense Advisor that resulted in my invitation to participate in this survey.

- ○ Strongly disagree (1)

- ○ Disagree (2)

- ○ Somewhat disagree (3)

- ○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

- ○ Somewhat agree (5)

- ○ Agree (6)

- ○ Strongly agree (7)

We understand that you may have had other interactions with a GameSense Advisor at Plainridge Park Casino. Please let us know how many times you have had the interactions (if any) noted below with a GameSense Advisor. Please respond using the dropdown menu.

Casual/Simple (i.e., I had a short interaction with a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gambling).
Number of times =

▼ 0 (0) ... 99 (99)

Demonstration (i.e., I had a GameSense Advisor show me how a game, responsible gambling tool, or gambling concept works).
Number of times =

▼ 0 (0) ... 99 (99)

Exchange (i.e., I had a conversation with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gambling or problem gambling).
Number of times =

▼ 0 (0) ... 99 (99)

Did prior interactions with a GameSense Advisor make you more comfortable during the interaction you mentioned earlier?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ I haven't had a prior interaction with a GameSense Advisor (3)

My previous interaction(s) with a GameSense Advisor:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Made me feel comfortable having another interaction. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Made me want to learn more about how games work (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Made me want to learn more about responsible gambling. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Made me want to learn more about problem gambling. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Made me want to learn about PlayMyWay. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Based on your current understanding of GameSense, what is its purpose?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (e.g., a place to chat; a lounge) (1)	○	○
It's a program that educate players about how games work (e.g., the rules). (2)	○	○
It's a program that educates players about the odds of winning at a particular game and the house edge of that game (3)	○	○
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit) (4)	○	○
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay - a budgeting tool where you track your play and receive notifications as you get closer to the budget you've set (5)	○	○
It's a program that helps dispel gambling-related myths (6)	○	○
It offers a place where players can find where to get support if they believe their gambling has become problematic (7)	○	○
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts (8)	○	○
Other (please specify): (9)	○	○

I think that the target audience for GameSense is...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Don't know (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
People who are new to gambling. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gamble occasionally. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gambling on a regular basis. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who have trouble controlling their gambling. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
All people who gamble. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

GameSense, and the responsible gambling education and tools it provides, was developed for players like me.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Don't know (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

Who provides GameSense and employs GameSense Advisors? Please check all that you think apply.

☐ The casino (1)

☐ Massachusetts Gaming Commission/ State of Massachusetts (2)

☐ Private enterprise/ non-profit organization (3)

☐ Don't know (4)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following items.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I consider Plainridge Park Casino a good place to gamble. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I trust Plainridge Park Casino. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with Plainridge Park Casino. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a strong sense of connection to Plainridge Park Casino. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Plainridge Park Casino meets or exceeds my expectations for a gaming operator. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel loyal to Plainridge Park Casino. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

| I feel Plainridge Park Casino wants me to keep my gambling within an affordable limit. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

On the following pages, we are going to ask you some questions about your beliefs and behaviors as they pertain to gambling.

In the **last 3 months**, what proportion of your gambling happened at Plainridge Park Casino:

○ 0% (1)

○ About 25% (2)

○ About 50% (3)

○ About 75% (4)

○ 100% (5)

In the **last 3 months**, when you visited Plainridge Park Casino, how often did you play:

	0% (1)	About 25% (2)	About 50% (3)	About 75% (4)	100% (5)
Slot machines (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Table games/Video Table games (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Video table games (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Sports betting (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Lottery (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (e.g., parimutuel/horse racing) Please specify: _____ (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Please think about your gambling at Plainridge Park Casino over the last three months.

In the **last 3 months**, approximately how much money have you spent gambling at **Plainridge Park Casino?** (Please answer to the closest dollar; e.g., 50).

_____

Over the **last 3 months**, **overall**, have you won, lost, or broke even playing at **Plainridge Park Casino?**

○ I have won money at Plainridge Park Casino (1)

○ I have lost money at Plainridge Park Casino (2)

○ I have broken even at Plainridge Park Casino (3)

Approximately how much money have you won playing at **Plainridge Park Casino** in this period of time? Please answer in dollars.

_____

Approximately how much money have you lost playing at **Plainridge Park Casino** in this period of time? Please answer in dollars.

_____

In the **last 3 months**, how often did you use your **Rewards Card** while playing at **Plainridge Park Casino?**

○ Never (0%) (1)

○ Rarely (1-33%) (2)

○ Sometimes (34-66%) (3)

○ Often (67-99%) (4)

○ Always (100%) (5)

In the **last 3 months**, overall **how much money** have you spent gambling **anywhere**? (Please answer to the closest dollar; e.g., 50).

_____

The following statements have to do with your beliefs and opinions about gambling. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

I believe that...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I should be able to walk away from gambling at any time. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should be aware of how much money I spend when I gamble. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's my responsibility to spend only money that I can afford to lose. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I should only gamble when I have enough money to cover all my bills first. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gambling is not a good way to make money. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My chances of winning get better after I have lost. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

| If I gamble more often, it will help me to win more than I lose. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

In the last 3 months...

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Frequently (5)	Usually (6)	Always (7)
I felt in control of my gambling behavior. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was honest with my family and/or friends about the amount of MONEY I spent gambling. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I was honest with my family and/or friends about the amount of TIME I spent gambling. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I only gambled with MONEY that I could afford to lose. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I only spent TIME gambling that I could afford to spend. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I considered the amount of MONEY I was willing to lose BEFORE I gambled. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I considered the amount of TIME I was willing to spend BEFORE I gambled. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

When you think about your gambling over the last 3 months, how often...

	Never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Most of the time (3)	Always (4)
...have you bet more than you could really afford to lose? (1)	○	○	○	○
...have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement? (2)	○	○	○	○
...have you gone back another day to try to win back the money you lost? (3)	○	○	○	○
...have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble? (4)	○	○	○	○
...have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling? (5)	○	○	○	○
...have people criticized your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true? (6)	○	○	○	○

...have you felt guilty about the way you gamble, or what happens when you gamble? (7)	○	○	○	○
...has your gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety? (8)	○	○	○	○
...has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household? (9)	○	○	○	○

Have you ever enrolled in voluntary self-exclusion (VSE) program?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Did you enroll in a VSE program in Massachusetts or outside of Massachusetts.

○ I enrolled in a VSE program in Massachusetts (1)

○ I enrolled in a VSE program outside of Massachusetts (2)

○ I enrolled in a VSE program both in and outside of Massachusetts (3)

Approximately when did you enroll in the VSE program in Massachusetts?

	Month	Day	Year

Please Select: (1) | ▼ January (1 ... December (12) | ▼ 1 (1 ... 31 (31) | ▼ 1900 (1 ... 2049 (150)

Are you still enrolled in the VSE program outside of Massachusetts?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Not at all 0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	Extremely 4 (4)
How I feel about myself is largely based on the amount of money I have. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
My moods are influenced by the amount of money I have. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
People will think less of me if I don't have a lot of money. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The opportunities that are available to me depend on the amount of money I have. (4)	○	○	○	○	○

I am a MyChoice Rewards member

     ○ Yes (1)

     ○ No (2)

What tier of the rewards program are you in?

○ Choice (i.e., red card) (1)

○ Advantage (i.e., orange card) (2)

○ Preferred (i.e., gold card) (3)

○ Elite (i.e., grey card) (4)

○ Owners Club (i.e., black card) (5)

Permission to Access MyChoice Rewards Player Data

 The purpose of the Survey is to get your input about gambling and responsible gambling attitudes and behaviors. We want to know what you like or don't like about responsible gambling programming and your gambling behavior.
 For this reason, and with the support of Plainridge Park Casino, we are asking for your permission to access your personal player-account data over the last three months. Specifically, we would like to know what games you have played and how much you have won or lost. Your name will not be attached to your information (i.e., the casino will not provide the research team with your identifying information). Your player data will be kept confidential—no state or other entities will have access to it. Your player data will be protected by Carleton University and not released to anyone outside the research team. Once data from the survey have been matched to your player data, your Rewards number will be deleted from all research records.

 * You can complete the survey and receive the gift card even if you do not provide permission to access your player data.

○ I consent (1)

○ I do not consent (2)

*This survey is open to MyChoice Rewards member invitees only. The survey can only be completed once for compensation (i.e., the Amazon.com or Dunkin' Donuts Gift Card).   My MyChoice Rewards identification number is:

_____

If you do not remember your MyChoice Rewards number, we can access your player account using your name instead. You will be given the option to do so on the next page.

Because I don't remember my **MyChoice Rewards** number, I give permission to the researchers to access my player account using my name. * The research team will delete any record of your name as soon as we link your player data with your survey data (by March 31, 2023).
My MyChoice Rewards account is under the name of:

_____

What is your gender identity?

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ Gender-fluid (3)

○ Trans man (4)

○ Trans woman (5)

○ Nonbinary (6)

○ Two-spirit (7)

○ Prefer to specify: My gender is (8)

_____

○ Prefer not to answer (9)

What is your age?

_____

Thank you for completing the GameSense: Players Survey!

 The information you have provided in this survey will help us provide better tools to promote positive play. Your feedback will help us improve GameSense.

Please select the gift card you would like to receive:

    ◯ I would like a $10 Amazon Gift Card (4)

    ◯ I would like a $10 Dunkin' Donuts Gift Card (5)

To receive your Gift Card, please provide an email address below (gift cards will be distributed within 48 hours. We appreciate your patience):

_____

Thank you for participating in this research!
What is the purpose of this research?
 This study aims to better understand how people approach responsible play strategies and make decisions about their gambling behaviors. We are particularly interested in your recent interaction with a GameSense Advisor. Specifically, we are interested in better understanding why players have interaction with GameSense Advisors and their impression of any interaction they may have had (e.g., did they find it helpful in terms of learning about responsible or problem gambling).

What can I do if I feel like I need help with gambling concerns?
 If you are experiencing problems with your gambling, feel free to call 1.800.327.5050 for treatment options, 1.800.426.1234 for help to exclude yourself from the Massachusetts casinos, or visit GameSense at https://gamesensema.com/and click on the live-chat option.

If I have any further questions, please feel free to contact us:
 If you have any questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact the research team at gambling.lab@carleton.ca (should you wish to contact us at a later date, please make note of this email address).

 For more information on how to keep your gambling fun and safe, please contact https://gamesensema.com/

Ethical concerns:
 This study has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B Reference # 117682). If you have any ethical concerns about this study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (ethics@carleton.ca).

Player-facing Employees' Awareness of and Engagement with GameSense in Massachusetts Casinos

Michael J. A. Wohl   Gray E. Gaudett   Christopher G. Davis

S. Nima Orazani   Nassim Tabri

Carleton University

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Authorship and acknowledgements

Authorship

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl, Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Carleton University Gambling Laboratory (CUGL) focuses on, among other things, factors that predict disordered gambling (e.g., erroneous beliefs, financial focus), facilitators of responsible gambling (e.g., monetary limit setting and adherence), and means to overcome barriers to behavior change (e.g., nostalgia for life lived before the addictive behavior took hold). Members of CUGL also examine the potential pitfalls and possible harm-minimization utility of rewards program membership. Dr. Wohl is the lead author of this report.

Gray E. Gaudett is a Master's student in Psychology under the supervision of Dr. Michael Wohl. Their research interests include factors that predict and maintain recovery from an addictive behavior and effective treatment programming. They contributed to all sections of the report.

Dr. Nassim Tabri, Associate Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory focuses on transdiagnostic risk and maintenance factors for health-compromising behaviors, with a focus on disordered gambling and eating. Another focus of the Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory is on the role of money and financial focus in the etiology and maintenance of disordered gambling. Relevant to the present context, Dr. Tabri also conducts research on responsible gambling and is a co-developer of the Positive Play Scale. For this report, he contributed to the selection of measures, data analysis, the production of figures, and editing drafts, and statistical analysis support.

Dr. Christopher G. Davis,
Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Dr. Davis' research lies at the intersection of social, personality and health psychology. In general terms, he explores the social, contextual, and personality factors that influence our psychological health. Relevant to the present context, he studies the psychological factors that affect gambling and substance use behavior. With respect to this report, he was responsible for data analysis and the production tables and figures, editing drafts of the report, and provided analytic and other support.

Nima Orazani is a postdoctoral fellow at Carleton University working with Dr. Michael Wohl. His main focus is on social movements/collective actions. After joining Dr. Wohl's lab, he has been involved in projects on gambling.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

What was the purpose of this evaluation of GameSense?

The "Player-facing Employee Survey" aimed to comprehensively evaluate the awareness, perceptions, and engagement of player-facing casino employees with the GameSense program, along with their referrals of patrons to GameSense resources. The purpose of this evaluation was to gain insights into employee interactions with GameSense, improve training and communication strategies, and enhance responsible gambling (RG) initiatives within the casino environment.

How was data collected and analyzed?

Recruitment and Data analysis. Data for this evaluation were collected through a survey administered to player-facing casino employees at three casinos in the State of Massachusetts. The recruitment process involved using employee email distribution lists and advertisements in employee lounges. The collected data were analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and latent class analyses (LCAs) to identify distinct employee groups based on their interactions and motivations related to GameSense.

What did we find?

Awareness and Perceived Purpose of GameSense: Nearly all 280 respondents (96.1%) were aware of GameSense, with the primary source of awareness being employee training (84.0%), closely followed by interaction with GameSense Advisors (74.3%). Interestingly, a significant number also became informed about the program through managers (71.6%) or fellow employees (69.6%). For those aware of GameSense, their understanding of its purpose was diverse. The majority correctly identified its role in educating players about RG (92.6%), providing RG tools (i.e., PlayMyWay; 84.4%), supporting those facing gambling problems (89.6%), and facilitating voluntary self-exclusion (87.7%). A notable proportion perceived GameSense as a relaxation lounge (27.1%). Moreover, although a substantial number knew of its role in dispelling gambling myths (66.0%), fewer were aware of its function in helping players understand game mechanics (59.1%). These insights underline the need for targeted efforts to clarify GameSense's comprehensive purpose and dispel misconceptions, especially concerning its diverse educational functions.

Perceived Target Audience for GameSense: Although a substantial portion (83.7%) acknowledged that GameSense's purpose is to assist individuals struggling with gambling control, the alignment was less prominent regarding occasional gamblers, with only around half (50.0%) agreeing that GameSense benefits people who gamble infrequently.

Engagement with GameSense Information Centers (GSIC) and GameSense Advisors (GSA): More than half (58.9%) of all respondents reported having visited a GSIC, while 32.5% indicated they had not yet done so (8.6% did not provide a response). A LCA highlighted three distinct groups among those who had visited GSICs, revealing diverse motivations. Group 1 (*n*=57) encompassed employees who endorsed all reasons for visiting the

GSIC, indicating "Comprehensive Interests". Group 2 (*n*=50) showed similarities to Group 1, albeit with a lesser endorsement of reasons tied to curiosity or general knowledge (i.e., they tended to visit purely to learn about RG). They typically endorsed reasons for visiting related to "RG Interests". Group 3 (*n*=53) were less likely to indicate they visited a GSIC for all of the provided reasons compared to those in Groups 1 and 2. These employees has "Focused Interests", which the most endorsed reason being "To be better informed should I need to pass information to players".

Among non-visitors, the most prevalent reason for not visiting a GSIC was not being asked to do so (59.3%) and belief that they already had RG knowledge (greater that 56.8% endorsement for these items). A LCA for non-visitors yielded two groups: Group 1 (*n*=53) predominantly endorsed reasons related to personal knowledge and RG familiarity. That is, they had "RG Proficiency Beliefs. Group 2 (*n*=32) endorsed the same reasons for not visiting a GSIC, but to a much lesser extent than those in Group 1. That is, they had "Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs".

Comparing visitors and non-visitors, those who visited GSICs demonstrated a better understanding of GameSense's purpose compared to non-visitors, indicating the value of engaging with GSICs in enhancing RG comprehension.

Interactions with GSAs. Among all 280 respondents, 68.8% reported having interacted with a GSA while 20.5% indicated they had not (10.8% did not respond to the query). The vast majority of employees reported having a positive experience with the GSA, with 87.0% noting that due to their experience interacting with a GSA, they would encourage others to do the same. Most (85.6%) also agreed that they felt more informed about RG after their interaction, and 79.9% of employees indicated that their interaction with a GSA made them feel the casino cares about its patrons.

Referrals. Among all respondents, 64.9% (*n*=126) reported having referred patrons to GSAs. Seven potential reasons why they would refer a patron to a GSA were presented. The predominant reasons for referring patrons included to help the patron learn about voluntary self-exclusion (75.9%), to help the patron enroll in voluntary self-exclusion (70.8%), and if they thought the patron had gambling problems (69.0%). Conversely, the least frequent motivation was to refer patrons for the sake of receiving swag (45.1%). Furthermore, a significant association emerged between employees who visited a GSIC and those who referred patrons to a GSA. Those who indicated that they had visited a GSIC and spoke to a GSA were 1.62 times more likely to refer a player to GameSense than those who had not visited a GSIC or spoke to a GSA (i.e., 70.9% vs. 43.5%).

What are some take home messages?

1. Player-facing employees exhibit high awareness of GameSense, primarily through training and interactions with GSAs. The perceived purpose of GameSense aligns with its true objectives, emphasizing education about RG and support for gambling-related concerns.

2. Employees actively engage with GSICs, driven by motives like enhancing RG information to players and addressing queries about games. Diverse visitor groups exhibit motivations ranging from game-related curiosity to the desire for information.

3. Interactions with GSAs prove valuable, boosting employees' understanding of RG strategies and their perception that the casino cares about its patrons.

4. Referral of patrons to GSAs shows strong correlation with GSIC visits, emphasizing their interconnectedness. Employees refer patrons for reasons like promoting voluntary self-exclusion and addressing potential gambling issues.

5. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive training, encouraging employee-customer interactions, and aligning perceptions with GameSense's genuine goals.

6. Insights gained from this evaluation provide a foundation for refining GameSense strategies, ensuring effective promotion of RG and an enhanced patron experience.

What do we recommend?

Our findings offer valuable insights into optimizing the GameSense program and enhancing RG initiatives. Based on these insights, we put forth the following recommendations:

1. **Comprehensive Specific Player-facing Employee Training**: Develop and implement comprehensive training programs for player-facing employees that transcend basic awareness. Equip them with in-depth knowledge about GameSense's objectives, resources, and its role in fostering RG among all players, irrespective of their gambling behavior.

2. **Address Misconceptions about GameSense**: Design targeted training modules to dispel misconceptions that employees might have about GameSense. Emphasize that the program is designed for all players, underscoring its value in promoting informed decision-making and enriching the overall gambling experience.

3. **Regular Communication with Player-facing Employees:** Encourage player-facing employees to seamlessly integrate references to GameSense into their interactions with players. By making this a natural part of conversations, RG discussions can become normalized, contributing to correcting misperceptions.

4. **Guidelines for Approaching All Patrons about RG:** Provide clear guidelines on approaching patrons about RG in a respectful manner. Equip employees with strategies to initiate conversations and manage potentially challenging situations, addressing concerns related to player responses.

5. **Emphasize Value of Employee Interactions with GSAs:** Showcase the positive impact of personal interactions with GSAs on employees' own understanding of RG. Motivate

employees to engage with GSAs to enhance their continuous learning and improve their ability to provide accurate information to players.

6. **Regular Refresher Training:** Implement regular refresher training sessions to reinforce RG messages and keep employees updated on the latest GameSense resources and information.

7. **Promote a Supportive Environment:** Cultivate a supportive atmosphere that encourages employees to comfortably discuss RG with patrons. Set clear expectations and provide guidance on managing complex conversations.

8. **Incorporate Employee Feedback:** Establish mechanisms to gather input from player-facing employees about their interactions with players and experiences with GameSense. Use this feedback to refine training programs and communication strategies continually.

9. **Add a Designated, GameSense branded, "Play Break" Sitting Area Inside the GSIC**. Expanding the footprint of GSICs to include a designated "break" area could be leveraged to initiate meaningful RG-oriented interactions with employees.

10. **Measurement of Impact:** Implement a system to gauge the impact of employee interactions with patrons regarding RG. This could involve tracking referrals to GameSense, evaluating shifts in player behavior, and obtaining feedback from employees on the effectiveness of their interactions.

What have we learned?

This evaluation of player-facing casino employees' awareness of and engagement with the GameSense program highlighted key areas for enhancing RG initiatives in casinos. Employees generally possess strong awareness of GameSense, often stemming from training and interactions with GSAs. However, misconceptions about the program's scope call for targeted communication strategies. Engaging with GSAs and visiting GSICs positively impacts employee understanding of RG. Motivations for referring patrons to GameSense range from voluntary self-exclusion to addressing potential gambling-related concerns. In response to our findings, we recommend targeted training enhancements, communication strategies, and the fostering of a supportive environment. Our insights offer a roadmap for integrating RG seamlessly into the casino experience, benefitting both patrons and the broader community.

1. Introduction

The promotion of responsible gambling (RG) practices and the use of RG tools are paramount goals within the gambling industry (Blaszczynski et al., 2004; Wohl et al. 2013). For example, when people visit a gaming venue, they may see RG educational materials that explain how games work (e.g., Wohl et al., 2010), pop-up messages when playing Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) that inform them about the odds of winning or whether they have reached a pre-determined limit on the amount of time or money they spent gambling (see Auer et al., 2014; Gainsbury et al., 2018; Stewart & Wohl, 2013), contact information for treatment services and programs should they believe their play is becoming (or has become) problematic (Blaszczynski et al., 2011; Dickson-Gillespie et al., 2008; Hing, 2004; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010), and means to voluntarily self-exclude from gambling should they think that they need to abstain from play (Dickson-Gillespie et al., 2008; Hing, 2004; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2010). These initiatives are typically provided to players via organized and branded RG programming, like GameSense—the program adopted by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission and operated by the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health to help facilitate RG for all players.

Player-facing employees who work for the gambling operator play a pivotal role in marketing communication (Dawson & Abbott, 2011; Prentice & Wong, 2016), which likely extends to RG programming (Ladouceur et al., 2004; Wohl et al., 2013). Indeed, by promoting RG practices (e.g., encouraging players to take breaks or set limits), player-facing employees can contribute to a culture of safer gambling within the casino environment (see Luo et al., 2017). Additionally, player-facing employees are well positioned to notice when players are exhibiting signs of problem gambling and direct them to a GameSense Advisor (GSA) to seek support (Quilty et al., 2015). Yet, very little empirical research has assessed employee attitudes toward

and experiences with RG programming, and the research that has been done (e.g., Abarbanel et al., 2019) did not focus exclusively on player-facing employees or examine whether attitudes and experiences with an RG program predict whether they refer patrons to that program. In the current research, we filled this gap by only recruiting employees who are in jobs where they have the potential to directly interact with patrons. We did so at the three casinos in Massachusetts— casinos that are mandated to offer GameSense. The purpose was to assess their awareness of, and engagement with, GameSense, as well as whether they have referred patrons to the program and their willingness to do so in the future.

1.1 Facilitating Help Seeking: Referral to GameSense

Player-facing employees are instrumental in identifying players who may be at risk of gambling related difficulties (Ponting et al., 2016). Indeed, by way of their regular interactions and observation skills, employees are well positioned to discern signs of problem gambling, such as changes in behavior, excessive gambling, or emotional distress. Quilty and colleagues (2015), for example, reported that most player-facing employees regularly observe players they believe likely to have a gambling problem. When so identified, employees should be referring patrons to appropriate resources and support systems, such as to a GameSense Information Center (GSIC) or GSA. In doing so, they contribute to the early detection and intervention of potential gambling problems.

Importantly, although employees expressing confidence in their ability to identify problem gambling behaviors, they are often inaccurate in their assessment—they classified many people who gambled problematically as low-risk and some people who were low-risk gamblers as having a gambling problem (Delfabbro et al., 2012). In other words, employees have difficulty differentiating problem gamblers from other gamblers. They also express that despite their

training, they are unsure what course of action should be taken when they believe a patron is exhibiting signs of distress, particularly when the player does not approach them for assistance (Beckett et al., 2020b; Hing & Nuske, 2012). Employees may not be confident about how best to approach the patron, including how best to refer patrons to GSAs (Abarbanel et al., 2018). There is concern they may offend the patron and thus receive a negative reaction in response (Beckett et al., 2020b; Hing & Nuske, 2012; Manian et al., 2023; Mulkeen, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Gray and colleagues (2021), found that most casino employees (71.4%) who work at a casino that offers GameSense (irrespective of whether their job is player-facing) have not referred players to the program.

Of course, programs like GameSense are created for all players and not simply those who may be experiencing gambling-related problems. Indeed, the expressed purpose of GameSense is to encourage all players to develop gambling-related knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors that reduce the risk of developing a gambling problem. However, employees may have a narrow view of the role of GSAs (Gray et al., 2021). Although employees may be aware that GSAs assist patrons with gambling problems, they may be unaware that GSAs also receive extensive training in patron-focused RG with the end of educating players about and encouraging players to adopt beliefs and behaviors that reduce gambling-related harms. Relatedly, employees may believe that GameSense is for patrons who have developed gambling problems, especially given their training often includes identifying and responding to patrons displaying behaviors indicative of risk for problem gambling (Beckett et al., 2020; O'Mahoney & Ohtsuka, 2015; Quilty et al., 2015). For programs like GameSense to be effective, it is important that casino employees understand the purpose of the program and have a broader understanding of not only GameSense services, but the responsibilities of GSAs (Gray et al., 2020).

Indeed, employees play an essential role in encouraging RG beliefs and behaviors, including referring them to essential RG resources such as GameSense (see Delfabbro et al., 2007; Quilty et al., 2015; Song et al., 2012). Specifically, player-facing employees possess a unique advantage in building trust and engagement with players through regular interactions. This trust allows for meaningful conversations about responsible and problematic gambling (see Hing & Nuske, 2012; Riley et al., 2018). Furthermore, player-facing employees are trained to identify early signs of potential gambling-related issues, enabling timely intervention and personalized assistance. By understanding each player's individual situation, they can make relevant referrals to RG programs like GameSense, tailoring the support to address specific needs. As educators and advocates, they also play a critical role in raising awareness about RG and its benefits.

2. Overview of Current Research

In the current research, we examined the proportion of player-facing employees who have engaged with GameSense and employees' reasons for visiting and for not visiting a GSIC. Importantly, we also examined whether employees differed in their reasons for visiting a GSIC or not visiting a GSIC, allowing for a nuanced understanding about whether they refer patrons. These segmentations may help facilitate targeted interventions, addressing specific motivations and barriers to visiting a GSIC, and inform the development of tailored training programs to enhance employee engagement and promote RG programming. We also assessed perceptions of the program and the RG materials and tools provided that aim to reduce gambling-related harms.

Lastly, we assessed the extent to which player-facing employees who engage with GameSense (by way of visiting a GSIC and speaking to a GSA about RG) refer patrons to GameSense. It is important to examine whether employees have interacted with a GSA about RG

in relation to referrals to GameSense because GSAs are the communicators of RG programming at the casino, and GSAs are not restricted to the GSIC, but frequently roam the casino to speak to patrons and employees. Thus, it is possible that an employee may visit a GSIC but not engage with a GSA or any RG material, or that an employee may engage with the GameSense program by way of an interaction with a GSA outside of the GSIC.

This research was conducted with player-facing casino employees at the three casinos in Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, each licensed casino operator has allocated on-site space for a GSIC, which is staffed by GSAs. Casino employees at each casino are provided with approximately 30 minutes of RG training during their new employee orientation but are not required to engage with GameSense (e.g., speak to a GSA directly about RG or visit a GSIC) following this short training session.

Data and materials reported in the study are available on the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/kpyqd/?view_only=af2cb96abda84cea9f68a04f131d9747. The current research was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (#117682).

3. Methods & Results

3.1 Method and Results Structure

The following section outlines the method and results structure used in this report. The analysis proceeded in two main stages: Sample Characteristics and GameSense Evaluation. In the first stage, we present descriptive information about the sample. Descriptive information included information about the age and gender composition of the sample as well as job title.

In the second stage, we evaluated knowledge about and uptake of GameSense. Specifically, we examined the proportion of player-facing employees who expressed awareness of GameSense. Among those who reported being aware of GameSense, we assessed the

perceived purpose of the program. Thereafter, we assessed the perceived target audience for Gamesense among all participants.

Next, we assessed engagement with GameSense. We did so both in terms of visits to a GSIC and interactions with a GSA. Specifically, we examined the proportion of players who reported visiting a GSIC and their reasons for doing so (or their reason for not visiting a GSIC), and the type of interactions respondents had with a GSA. Additionally, we report the results of two latent class analyses (LCAs): one that assessed reasons for visiting and the other that assessed reasons for not visiting. We did so to identify possible subgroups (called 'classes'). For instance, we examined whether the reasons why people visited a GSIC can be meaningfully clustered or grouped together. A detailed description of model selection is provided in Appendix A.

Lastly, we examined the proposition of player-facing employees who referred patrons to a GSA as well as factors that may have influenced their decision to refer (or not). For example, we assessed whether the proportion of employees who refer patrons varies as a function of whether they have visited a GSIC or not.

3.2 Recruitment

To recruit respondents, an email was sent to player-facing employees (i.e., a staff member who interacts directly with casino customers; e.g., dealers, slot attendants, cashiers, hosts, security personnel) at one of the three casinos in Massachusetts. Potential respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to get their "thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors" and that input was welcome even if the player had never heard about GameSense. They were offered a US$10 Amazon.com gift card for participating in the survey. A link to the survey was provided in the body of the

email, and those who accessed the link were directed to an online consent form that provided further detail about the purpose of the study, compensation for participation, data security, and their right to withdraw. Those who consented to participate were directed to the online survey (see Appendix B for the survey).

The study was launched on October 24, 2022 and closed on November 26, 2022.

3.3 Sample Characteristics

A total of 327 employees from across the three casinos in Massachusetts responded to our invitation to participate. Of these, five respondents did not consent to the study and four respondents consented to participate but did not respond to any of the survey items. We also removed 27 respondents who were not customer-facing employees and five respondents who did not provide their job title or the time they had worked at the casino. Additionally, six respondents were identified as duplicates. Because there was no manipulation involved, we kept the most completed entry (instead of keeping the first entry) and the other entry was removed. Thus, our analyses were based on a sample of 280 individuals ($M_{age} = 39.5$, $SD = 12.24$). Demographic and job title information are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	n	%
Age		
21-24	15	5.4
25-34	71	25.4
35-44	65	23.2
45-54	38	13.6
55-64	24	8.6
65+	9	3.2
Did not indicate	58	20.7
Gender		
Man	120	42.8
Woman	96	34.2
Other	9	3.2
Did not indicate	5	1.8
Job title		
Dealer	85	39
Manager	60	22.6
Customer Services	40	14.3
Security	18	6.4
Environmental Services	6	2.1
Marketing	5	1.86
Other	4	1.4
Time worked at the casino[1]	38.7 (31.36)	

Note. [1]Mean time worked in months provided.

3.4 Possible Correlates of Awareness and Engagement with GameSense

The following variables were included to assess whether they were associated with player-facing employees' awareness and perceptions of GameSense, as well as their engagement with the program (i.e., why employees engaged with GameSense or not) and whether they referred players to the program.

3.4.1 ***Perceptions about Positive Play.*** The Positive Play Scale (PPS; Wood et al., 2017) assesses the extent which players hold two RG beliefs: Gambling Literacy (i.e., the extent to which a player has an accurate understanding about the nature of gambling) and Personal

Responsibility (i.e., the extent to which a player believes they should take ownership of their

gaming behaviour). It also assesses two RG behaviors: Honesty & Control (i.e., the extent to

which players are honest with others about their gaming behavior and feel in control of their

behavior) and Pre-Commitment (i.e., the extent to which a player considers how much money

and time they should spend gambling). In the current study, we used a modified version of the

PPS to assess perceptions about the extent to which employees believe players should hold such

beliefs and engage in such behaviors. We call this the Perceptions about Positive Play Scale (P-

PPS).

4. Assessment of GameSense

In this section, we report the extent to which respondents reported awareness of

GameSense and the perceived purpose of GameSense among those who were aware. After

describing GameSense to all players, they were then asked to report who they think the target

audience is for GameSense. We then assessed engagement with GameSense in terms of visits to

a GSIC and interactions with a GSA. Lastly, we assessed the likelihood of referring players to

GameSense (to either a GSIC or a GSA).

4.1 GameSense Awareness

To assess awareness of GameSense, respondents were first asked whether they had heard

about the program. Almost all employees (96.1%; $n = 269$) indicated they had heard of

GameSense, 10 (3.6%) indicated that they have not, and one (0.4%) did not provide a response.

Employees who were familiar with GameSense were asked where they heard about the

program. They were provided eleven possible places they may have heard about the program

(plus an 'other' category) with a "yes" or "no" response option on each possibility (see Table 2

for a full list and percent endorsement). The most endorsed response (84.0%; $n = 216$) was

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learning about GameSense during employee training. The second most endorsed means of

becoming informed about the program (74.3%) was from a GSA. Notably, a large proportion of

employees were informed about the program from managers (71.6%) or another employee

(69.6%). Most of those who indicated 'other' indicated they became aware of GameSense at

work, either around the casino, on the website, or during orientation.

Table 2

Where Respondents Heard About GameSense

Sources:	% agreement
Training	84.0
A GameSense Advisor	74.3
Manager	71.6
Other employees	69.6
Players	42.4
Print advertisements	30.0
MassGaming.com	26.0
Friends	24.1
Social Media	21.4
Radio advertisements	11.0
TV advertisements	8.6
Other	2.3

Note. $N = 257$ who responded to at least one item. Percentages add to more than 100% because
respondents could list more than one reasons.

     4.1.1 Perceived Purpose of GameSense. For those (n = 269) who indicated awareness of

GameSense, we asked what they believed to be the purpose of GameSense. They were provided

eight response options (see Table 3). Six of the options reflected the true purpose(s) of

GameSense and one reflected an incorrect purpose: "It offers a place where players can bet on

sports". Also included was an item that asked whether "It offers a place where players can relax

away from the gaming floor". Although initially included as an incorrect purpose, following data

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collection it was decided that players may be using GSICs to take a break from the gaming floor (a known RG strategy). Because it was not known whether players were using it in such a manner, we ultimately decided this item as neither correct nor incorrect. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each statement was a purpose of GameSense (yes or no). We scored these responses as +1 for a correct response, -1 for an incorrect response, and 0 if the response was neither right nor wrong.

Results showed that most respondents correctly checked that GameSense helped educate players about RG (92.6%), provided RG tools (i.e., PlayMyWay; 84.4%), offered supports for those who develop gambling related problems (89.6%), and that GameSense helped facilitate voluntary self-exclusion (87.7%). A lower proportion of respondents (59.1%) knew that GameSense helps players understand how games work or helps dispel gambling-related myths (66.0%). A very low proportion (6.7%) incorrectly endorsed the item about GameSense being a place where players can bet on sports. However, a relatively large proposition of employees endorsed that GameSense was a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (27.1%).

Table 3

Purposes of GameSense

Purposes:	% agreement
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly	92.6
It offers a place where players can find where to get support if they believe their gaming has become problematic	89.6
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts	87.7
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay	84.4
It's a program that helps dispel gaming-related myths	66.0
It's a program that teaches players how games work	59.1
It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge)	27.1
It offers a place where players can bet on sports*	6.7

*Note. N = 269. * indicates incorrect purpose.*

4.2 Perceived Target Audience for GameSense

All respondents read the following brief description of the program:

> GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy. GameSense Advisors work
> at a GameSense Info Center located at MGM Springfield/Encore Boston
> Harbor/Plainridge Park Casino. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the
> areas of responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for
> help. Many GameSense Advisors come to the position with professional gaming
> experience which is useful in understanding patrons' needs.

They were then asked to respond to five items that assessed the perceived target audience for

GameSense. These items, together with their means (on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 =

"strongly disagree" and 7 = *"strongly agree"*) and the percentage agreeing (i.e., > than the

"neutral" midpoint) are provided in Table 4.

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Table 4

Perceived Target Audience for GameSense

Sources:	*M* (SD)	% agreement
People who have trouble controlling their gaming.	5.76 (1.74)	83.7
People who gamble on a regular basis.	5.37 (1.60)	74.8
All people who gamble.	5.04 (1.82)	67.3
People who gamble occasionally.	4.38 (1.69)	50.0

Note. *Ns* range from 250 to 257. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agreeing". Percent agreement was based on responses of 5 or higher on the scale.

The purpose of GameSense is to help the full spectrum of players. Although most employees (83.7%) correctly agreed that GameSense helps people who are having trouble controlling their gambling, only half of all employees agreed that GameSense helps people who gamble occasionally (50%) and only approximately two-thirds correctly agreed that GameSense is for all people who gamble (67.3%).

4.3 Engagement with GameSense

We assessed engagement with GameSense in two ways. The first way was in terms of whether employees visited a GSIC. The second way was in terms of interactions with a GSA at either a GSIC or on the gaming floor. Of the 280 employees, 165 (58.9%) noted that they had visited a GSIC, 91 indicated that they had not visited a GSIC (32.5%), and 24 (8.6%) did not provide a response to this query.

4.3.1 Reasons for Visiting. Respondents who indicated they visited a GSIC were asked to indicate the reasons why they visited from a list of ten possible reasons (plus an 'other' option) with a "yes" or "no" response option on each possibility (see Table 5 for a full list and percent endorsement). Of the 165 respondents who indicated they had visited, 5 indicated "no" to all reasons; thus, a total of 160 respondents provided at least one response.

The most frequently endorsed reason for player-facing employees to visit a GSIC was to become better informed to pass RG information to players (71.3%). Least often endorsed reason for visiting was to learn about how games work (29.4%) or because employees stumbled across the GSIC and were curious (31.2%).

Table 5

Reasons for Visiting a GSIC

Reasons:	% agreement
To be better informed should I need to pass information to players.	71.3
I heard about the Info Center and was curious.	54.4
To learn about supports for problem gaming.	51.9
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion.	50.0
To learn more about responsible gaming	49.4
To learn about gaming-related myths.	42.5
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard).	36.3
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay	34.4
I stumbled upon one and was curious.	31.2
To learn more about how games work.	29.4
Other	12.5

Note. N = 160 who provided at least one reason. Percentage adds to more than 100 because respondents could endorse more than one reason.

To determine whether there were distinct groups of employees who visited GSICs for different sets of reasons, we conducted a LCA. The LCA looks for common response patterns in a sample. Of the 165 employees who indicated that they visited a GSIC, we excluded five from the LCA because they did not provide a response to any of the provided reasons for visiting a Center. Thus, we included the data of 160 employees in the LCA. We determined three distinct groups could be identified (see Appendix A for details). Group 1 (*n* = 57) included employees who endorsed all the reasons to visit the GSIC. We labelled this group "Comprehensive

Interests". Group 2 (*n* = 50) was similar to Group 1 except that members of Group 2 were less

likely than those in Group 1 to endorse that they visited a GSIC for non-RG reasons such as

curiosity, to learn how games work, and to get swag. We labelled employees in this group as

having "RG Interests". Those in Group 3 (*n*=53) were less likely to indicate they visited a GSIC

for all of the provided reasons compared to those in Groups 1 and 2. The most endorsed reason

for visiting a GSIC among employees in Group 3 was "To be better informed should I need to

pass information to players". Thus, we labelled employees in Group 3 as having "Focused

Interests".

See Table 6 for the full list of reasons why employees visited and the extent to which

members of each group endorse various reasons for visiting a GSIC. Figure 1 provides a graphic

description of these proportions. Specifically, the distance from the origin (middle) of the graph

indicates the proportion of the respondents in that group that endorsed each specific reason as to

why they have visited the GSIC.

Table 6

Proportion Who Affirmed Each Reason for Visiting a GSIC by Group

Reason	Comprehensive Interests (*n* = 57)	RG Interests (*n* = 50)	Focused Interests (*n* = 53)
To be better informed should I need to pass information to players	1.00	.92	.64
To learn about supports for problem gaming	1.00	.95	.18
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion	1.00	.91	.19
To learn more about responsible gaming	1.00	.82	.16
To learn about gaming-related myths	1.00	.78	.10
To learn more about how games work	1.00	.25	.06
I stumbled upon one and was curious	.99	.11	.37
I heard about the Info Center and was curious	.91	.73	.47
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard)	.82	.26	.43
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay	.77	.56	.10

Note. RG = Responsible Gambling.

Figure 1

Results of the LCA Examining Reasons for Visiting a GSIC with Three Groups
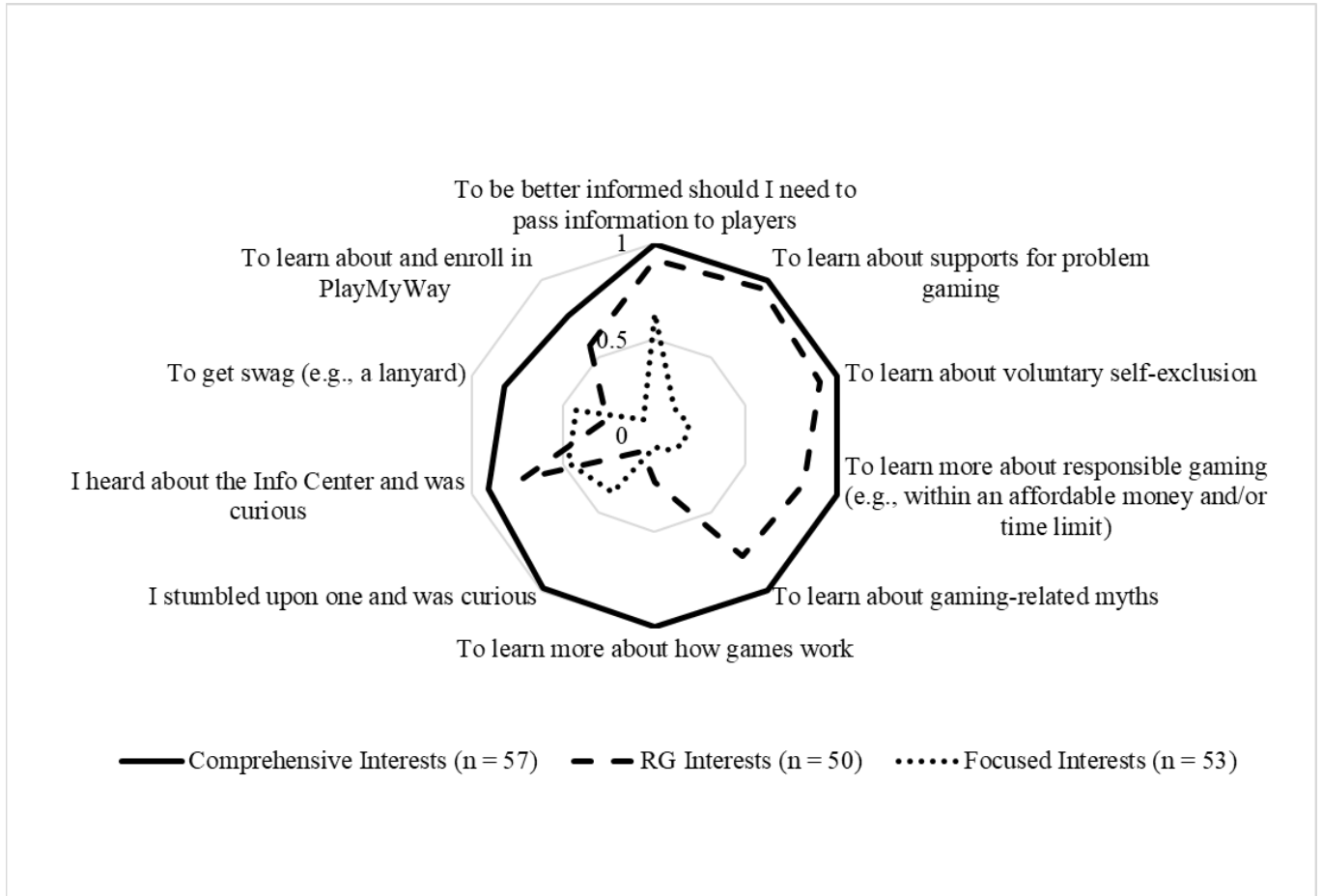
To better understand the three groups, we examined whether they differed in terms of demographic variables (gender and age) and their score on the P-PPS. A series of ANOVA tests were conducted to assess whether there were differences in perceived positive play between the three groups of employees who visited a GSIC identified by way of the LCA. There was not a statistically significant main effect of group on gambling literacy, $F(2, 144) = 1.29$, $p = .28$, honesty and control, $F(2, 143) = 0.81$, $p = .45$, or pre-commitment, $F(2, 142) = 1.69$, $p = .19$. However, there was a statistically significant group membership effect on personal

responsibility, $F(2, 145) = 5.77$, $p = .004$. Least square difference tests (LSD) revealed that those who were Focused Interests believed in personal responsibility less than those who were Comprehensive Interests ($p = .01$) and those who were RG Interests ($p = .002$). There was no significant difference between those who fell under the Comprehensive Interests and RG Interests groups ($p = .45$). Means and standard deviations of personal responsibility across three groups are in Table 7.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of P-PPS Subscales and Age Across Three Groups of Employees who Visited a GSIC

	Focused Interests		Comprehensive Interests		RG Interests	
	n	*M (SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*
Personal responsibilities	53	5.57$_a$ (0.93)	49	5.99$_b$ (0.90)	46	6.13$_b$ (0.73)
Gambling literacy	52	5.74 (1.35)	49	5.37 (1.58)	46	5.80 (1.43)
Honesty and control	51	6.32 (0.15)	49	6.29 (0.16)	46	6.53 (0.11)
Pre-commitment	51	6.37 (1.14)	48	6.66 (0.79)	46	6.65 (0.60)
Age	53	37.04 (10.98)	47	40.34 (14.76)	44	44 (12.15)

Note. Means with different subscripts are different at $p < .05$.

To examine the relations between group membership and employees' gender, we conducted a chi-square test. Results indicated that there was no association, $c^2 (2) = 5.19$, $p = .08$.

4.3.2 Reasons for not Visiting. Employees who reported they had not yet visited a GSIC were asked to indicate their reasons for not visiting one. Seven possible reasons were provided (and an 'other' option) with a "yes" or "no" response option on each possibility (see Table 8 for a full list, percent endorsement, and the number of respondents who endorsed a particular reason). Of the 91 respondents who reported they had yet to visit a GSIC, ten did not endorse any

reason. Thus, the data of 81 respondents were examined. The most frequently endorsed reasons

for not visiting a GSIC was that no one had asked them to do so (59.3%) and already knowing

how games work (59.3). A very low proportion of employees who had yet to visit a GSIC

endorsed the reason that GSAs do not help players (4.9%) or that a GSIC should not be at the

casino (4.9%).

Table 8

Reasons for Not Visiting a GSIC

Reasons:	% agreement
No one has asked me to check GameSense out.	59.3
I already know how games work.	59.3
I already know about PlayMyWay	58
I already know about gaming-related myths.	56.8
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything.	17.3
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players.	4.9
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino.	4.9
Other	6.2

Note. $N = 81$ who provided at least 1 reason; Percent agreement adds to more than 100 because respondents could endorse more than one reason.

We then conducted a LCA to examine whether there were subgroups of employees who

differed in terms of the reasons for not visiting GSICs (see Table 9 and Figure 2). Two groups

emerged from our analysis. Group 1 ($n = 53$) comprised employees who largely endorsed the

following reasons "I already know how games work," "I already know about gaming-related

myths," and "I already know about PlayMyWay – a budgeting tool that allows a player to set a

money limit and track their play." We labelled members of this class as having "RG Proficiency

Beliefs." Group 2 ($n = 32$) endorsed the same reasons for not visiting a GSIC, but to a much

lesser extent than those in Group 1. We labelled members of this class as having "Tempered RG

Proficiency Beliefs."

Table 9

Proportion Who Affirmed Each Reason for Not Visiting a GSIC by Group

Reason	RG Proficiency Beliefs (n = 53)	Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs (n = 32)
No one asked me to check GameSense out	.70	.55
I already know how games work	.89	.34
I already know about gaming-related myths	1	.20
I already know about PlayMyWay	.84	.38
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything	.37	.00
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players	.05	.06
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino	.08	.03

Figure 2

Results of the LCA Examining Reasons for Not Visiting a GSIC with Two Classes
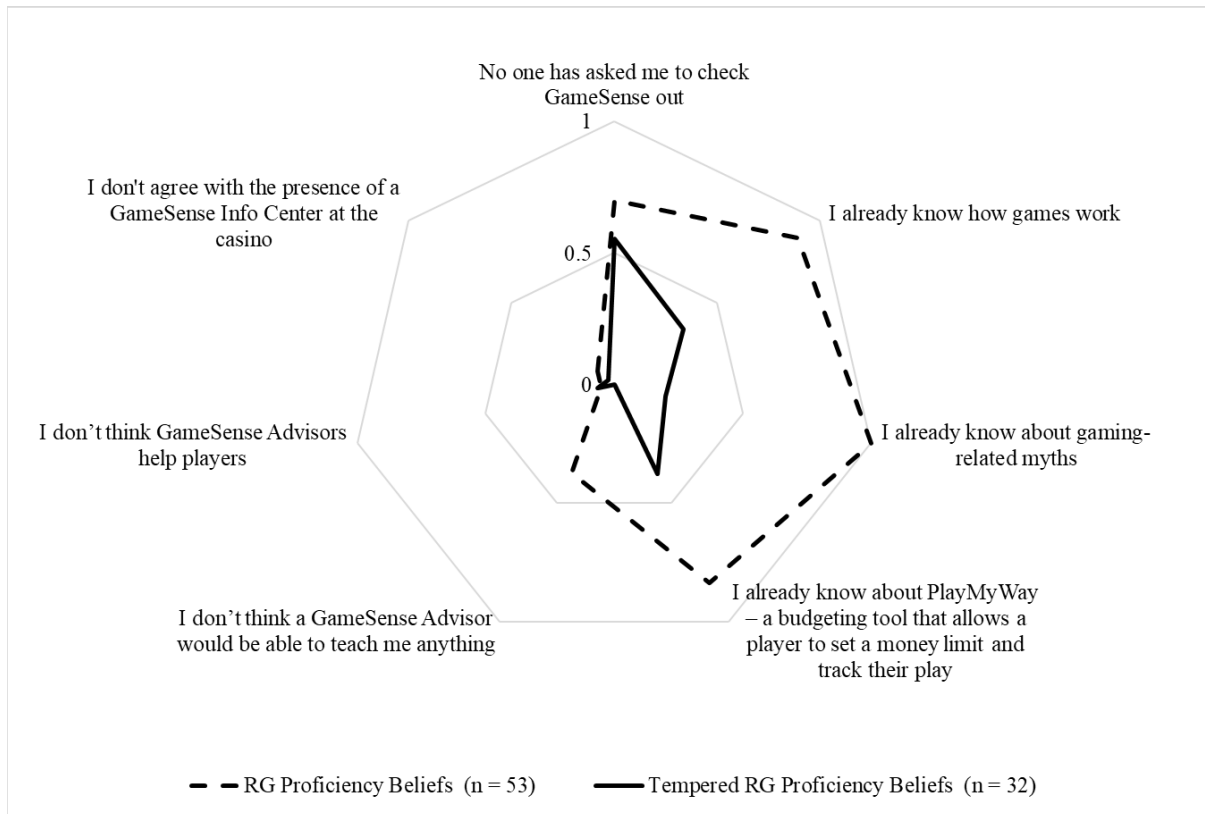
To examine whether group membership is related to participants' gender, age, and scores on the four subscales of P-PPS, we ran a series of *t*-tests. There was no statistically significant effect of group membership on age, $t(72) = 0.44$, $p = .67$, Personal Responsibility, $t(75) = 0.77$, $p = .44$, gambling literacy, $t(75) = 1.69$, $p = .10$, and Honesty and Control, $t(75) = 1.73$, $p = .09$. However, there was a significant effect of group membership on Pre-Commitment such that employees who had Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs were more likely to endorse the belief that players should set limits to their gambling behavior than employees who had RG Proficiency Beliefs, $t(75) = 2.05$, $p = .04$. See Table 10 for group means and standard deviations. Moreover, we conducted a chi-square test to examine the relationship between gender and group

membership. There was no significant relationship between gender and group membership, $c^2(1)$ = .04, $p = .85$, *phi* = -.02, $N = 66$ (for group means and standard deviations see Table 11).

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of P-PPS Subscales and Age Across Two Groups of Patrons who Have not Visited a GSIC

	Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs		RG Proficiency Beliefs	
	n	*M* (*SD*)	*n*	*M* (*SD*)
	30	5.88 (0.98)	47	5.68 (1.13)
Personal Responsibility				
Gambling Literacy	30	6.02 (1.18)	47	5.52 (1.34)
Honesty and Control	30	6.54 (0.77)	47	6.14 (1.11)
Pre-Commitment	30	6.66[*] (0.67)	47	6.16 (1.22)
Age	29	37.45 (11.14)	45	36.27 (11.59)

Note. Means with asterisk ([*]) are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Table 11

Gender Frequency Across Two Groups of Patrons who Have not Visited a GSIC

	Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs	RG Proficiency Beliefs
Male	15	24
Female	11	16

4.3.4 Comparison Between Those who Visited and Those who did not Visit. Next, we examined whether employees who visited a GSIC and those who did not differed in terms of the perceived purpose of GameSense. Recall, we provided eight items that assessed the perceived purpose of GameSense. These items, listed in Table 3, included six correct purposes, one incorrect purpose, and one purpose that is neither right nor wrong. Respondents were asked to

indicate whether each item was a purpose of GameSense (yes or no). We scored these responses as +1 for a correct response, -1 for an incorrect response, and 0 if they answered neither right nor wrong.

Those who had visited a GSIC ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.94$) were more correct in terms of the purpose of GameSense than those who had not visited a GSIC ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 2.06$), $t(245) = 2.18$, $p = .03$, $d = .29$, 95% CI [0.28, .560].

4.4 Interactions with a GSA

All 288 respondents were asked whether they had ever interacted with a GSA. A total of 198 (68.8%) indicated they had interacted with a GSA, 59 (20.5%) indicated that they had not interacted with a GSA, and 31 (10.8%) did not provide a response to this query.

They were also asked to rate the extent to which their interaction(s) made them feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly, more informed about how games worked, and made them feel that the casino cares about its patrons. Lastly, they were also asked whether they would encourage customers to speak with a GSA or visit a GSIC. Response options were anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). Responses are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Rating Experience of Interacting with GSAs

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor:	*M* (*SD*)	% agreement
I would encourage others to speak with a GSA.	5.82 (1.12)	87.0
I feel more informed about responsible gaming.	5.85(1.23)	85.6
I would encourage others to visit a GSIC.	5.83 (1.16)	84.9
I feel that the casino cares about its customers.	5.70 (1.33)	79.9
I feel more informed about how gaming games work.	5.40 (1.39)	68.3

Note. Ns ranged from 183-188 of 198 who had interacted with a GSA. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

4.4.1 Comparison Between LCA groups for Those who Visited a GSIC. We examined whether there was a difference in interactions with a GSA between employees in the Comprehensive Interests, RG Interests, and Focused Interests groups. The difference between the three groups was not statistically significant, $c^2(2) = 2.23$, p = .33. Specifically, most employees with Comprehensive Interests (87.7%), RG Interests (94%), and Focused Interests (84.9%) have interacted with a GSA.

4.4.2 Comparison Between LCA Groups for Those who did not Visit a GSIC. We examined whether there was a difference in interactions with a GSA between employees in the RG Proficiency Beliefs and Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs groups. The difference between the two classes was not statistically significant, $c^2(1) = .06$, p = .80. Specifically, only half of

employees who had RG Proficiency Beliefs (52.8%) or had Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs (50.0%) reported they interacted with a GSA.

4.5 Referral to a GSA

One of the objectives of the current study was to assesses factors influencing player-facing employees' decisions to direct patrons towards GameSense. In this section, among other things, we examine the expressed reasons why some player-facing employees refer patrons whilst other do not. Ultimately, the aim is to gain insights into how to promote and improve employee engagement with the GameSense program.

4.5.1. Reasons for Referring. Results showed that 70.9% (n = 100) of player-facing casino employees who both visited a GSIC and interacted with a GSA (n =141) recommended a player to GameSense. Because employees do not need to visit a Center to have a conversation about RG with a GSA, we also assessed the extent to which player-facing employees who reported they spoke to a GSA about RG (n = 187) referred patrons to GameSense. Results showed that 64.2% (n = 120) of such employees indicated that they recommended GameSense to a player. These employees were asked their reasons for doing so. They were provided with seven possible reasons for referring a patron. Responses were anchored at 1 *(never)* and 5 *(almost always/always)*. See Table 13 for a full list of items, mean endorsement of each possible reason, and percent agreeing based on number of employees who note have referred a patron for that particular reason (i.e., 2 or higher on the scale). Employees most often referred patrons to a GSA so they could either learn about voluntary self-exclusion (75.9%) or self-exclude (70.8), or because they believed the patron had a potential gambling problem (69%). Least often, employees referred players to a GSA so they could get swag (45.1%).

Table 13

Reasons for Referring Players to a GSA

When you recommended a customer speak to a GSA, how often was it for the following reason(s):	*M* (*SD*)	% agreement
So they could learn about voluntary self-exclusion.	3.30 (1.27)	75.9
So they could voluntarily self-exclude.	3.12 (1.32)	70.8
I thought they had a gaming problem.	3.15 (1.30)	69.0
So they could learn about and/or enroll in PlayMyWay.	2.93 (1.27)	67.5
To have them learn about gaming-related myths.	2.73 (1.28)	62.0
To have them learn how to play a game.	2.53 (1.38)	49.1
So they could get swag (i.e., a lanyard).	2.27 (1.26)	45.1

Note. *Ns* range from 112-116. Means are on a 5-point scale where 1 = "never" and 5 = "almost always/always". Percent agreement was based on responds of 2 or higher on the scale.

We also compared the proportion who had referred among those who visited a GSIC and spoke to a GSA with those who had not visited or spoke to a GSA (outside of a GSIC). Those who indicated that they had visited a GSIC and spoke to a GSA were 1.62 times more likely to refer a player to GameSense than those who had not visited a GSIC or spoke to a GSA (i.e., relative risk ratio; 70.9% vs. 43.5%, $c^2(1) = 11.36$, $p < .001$), which is a small-to-moderate effect.

We also found a statistically significant association between the three LCA classes and whether the employee referred a player to GameSense, $c^2(2) = 14.14$ $p < .001$. As indicated in Table 5, 87.0% of those in the Comprehensive Interests class referred a player to GameSense compared to 72.3% of those in the RG Interests class. Only 51.1% of those in the Focused Interests class had referred a player to a GSA. The difference in proportions between the first two classes was not statistically significant, $p = .08$, but both classes differed significantly from the third class, $ps < .05$.

4.5.2 Reasons for not Referring. Next, we asked the 68 employees who did not refer patrons to a GSA why they had not done so. The eight possible reasons were provided (plus an 'other' option), which are listed in Table 14. Response options were anchored at 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 7 *(strongly agree).* The most frequently endorsed items were that they never saw a need to do so (65.7%), that employees did not feel comfortable recommending a patron to a GSA (37.3%), and that patrons can become aggressive when employees recommend that they speak to a GSA (35.4%). All other means were at or below the mid-point of the scale with less than 50% endorsement. The least frequently endorsed items related to the belief that GSAs do not help players (3%) and that GSAs are not helpful in general (3.1%).

Table 14

Reasons for not Referring Players to a GSA

Why haven't you ever recommended a customer speak with a GSA?	*M* (*SD*)	% agreement
There has never been a need.	5.22 (1.55)	65.7
I don't feel comfortable suggesting that to players.	3.79 (1.68)	37.3
Players can be aggressive to staff when they recommend speaking with a GSA.	4.00 (1.60)	35.4
Players are often too 'zoned out' or engrossed in their play to approach them about GameSense.	4.28 (1.41)	35.4
It's not my place to do so.	3.36 (1.76)	26.9
Players don't respond when you try to engage with them about speaking to a GSA.	3.89 (1.12)	23.1
I don't believe that GameSense helps players	1.97 (1.18)	3
GSAs aren't helpful.	2.00 (1.12)	3.1
Other (please specify).	3.75 (1.03)	4.2

Note. *Ns* range from 24-67. Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

5. Discussion

In the current research, we assessed awareness and perceptions of GameSense as well as possible interactions with a GSA among player-facing casino employees at the three casinos currently in operation in the State of Massachusetts. Assessing awareness and perceptions of GameSense, as well as possible interactions with a GSA, among player-facing casino employees serves several important purposes. Firstly, understanding employees' awareness of GameSense allows for the tailoring of training programs, ensuring employees are well-informed about responsible gambling measures and can provide accurate information to patrons. This, in turn, may enhance the overall patron experience given that patrons' perceptions about the extent to which a casino is committed to RG is positively associated with patron satisfaction as well as willingness to use RG tools (see Abarbanel, Cain, & Philander, 2018; Hollingshead & Wohl, in press). Moreover, player-facing casino employees are often the initial point of contact for customers, making assessments of their interactions with GSAs crucial (see Luo et al., 2017; Wohl et al., 2013). By evaluating these interactions, the casino can gauge the effectiveness of employee engagement in conveying RG options such as self-awareness, limit-setting, and identifying potential gambling issues.

Furthermore, assessing employees' perceptions of GameSense contributes to identifying communication gaps and refining strategies to effectively convey RG messages. The feedback loop created through this assessment process is invaluable, as it provides insights into program effectiveness, customer reactions, and potential implementation challenges from those directly involved. Additionally, understanding how employees perceive GameSense sheds light on the program's integration within the casino's culture. Positive perceptions align RG initiatives with the casino's values, while negative perceptions indicate a need for cultural adjustments.

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5.1 Awareness and Perceptions of GameSense

We found that nearly all respondent expressed awareness of the GameSense program. Awareness appeared to be a product of new employee training sessions. Additionally, a large proportion of employees also noted hearing about the program from GSAs, managers, and/or other employees. Thus, employees hear about the GameSense program from many sources at the casino. Importantly, those who were aware of GameSense expressed a correct understanding about its purpose. Specifically, they believed that the purpose of GameSense is to educate players about RG, provide access to PlayMyWay (i.e., a budgeting tool) or facilitate access to voluntary self-exclusion, and provide support to those who feel their gambling has become problematic. This is in line with research by Abarbanel and colleagues (2019), who found that player-facing employees (compared to those in other areas of the casino) are more knowledgeable about the purpose of RG programs. However, this study did not examine differences in awareness between player-facing employees and back of house employees, making any such explanation in the current research speculative.

Interestingly, almost one-third of player-facing casino employees believed that the GSIC is a lounge (i.e., a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor). Although this perception may not directly align with the stated purposes of GSICs, it raises an intriguing opportunity for the RG landscape. The concept of a designated "Play Break" section within GSICs could serve as an effective way to integrate RG strategies and increase employee engagement with GameSense. Specifically, such an innovative addition to GSICs could lead to meaningful RG-oriented interactions between an employee and a GSA. Moreover, by providing a larger footprint on the gaming floor to accommodate such an area, it would demonstrate the casino's commitment to RG initiatives.

Moreover, whilst most player-facing employees correctly believed that GameSense is for people who have trouble controlling their gambling, approximately two-thirds of respondents correctly believed GameSense is for all people who gamble. These results are in line with research by Gray and colleagues (2021), who showed that although employees are aware that the purpose of GameSense is to assist patrons with gambling problems, they have a narrow view of other aspects of the program as well as the role of GSAs. Specifically, employees focus on GameSense as an intervention-based program and dismiss (or fail to understand) that GameSense provides resources, information, and assistance to casual and regular gamblers, emphasizing the importance of setting limits, managing time and money spent on gambling, and understanding the odds of various games to promote RG.

The training of new employees often focuses on identifying and responding to patrons displaying behaviors indicative of risk for problem gambling (Beckett et al., 2020; O'Mahoney & Ohtsuka, 2015; Quilty et al., 2015). Highlighting the program's broader role in promoting RG practices can help to improve employees' understanding of the program and address misconceptions, which may lead to a more inclusive understanding of GameSense's target audience. Indeed, ultimately, these results suggest a potential gap in the communication and training processes related to GameSense within the casino. That is, there may be a disconnect between the intended purpose of the GSIC and how it is being perceived by employees. This misinterpretation could lead to confusion among patrons who visit a GSIC seeking a relaxation area, only to find RG materials instead. Moreover, this misunderstanding may hinder the effectiveness of GameSense to achieve its primary objective of promoting RG. If employees themselves are not clear about the GSIC's role, their ability to guide and educate customers about RG practices could be compromised. This could inadvertently undermine efforts to foster a

safe and RG environment for its patrons. To address this issue, there's a need for targeted interventions, including improved training and communication strategies for employees. Enhancing the clarity of information provided about the purpose of GameSense and what is offered at GSICs.

5.2 Engagement with GameSense

Contrary to prior work that showed a minority of casino employees (33%) engaged with the program (see Gray et al. 2020), most employees in the current research visited a GSIC and/or interacted with a GSA. One reason for this difference is that we recruited only player-facing casino staff, whereas previous research also recruited employees who had few opportunities to interact with patrons. Those who do not occupy jobs where they have contract with patrons may not see the need to visit a GSIC or interact with a GSA. Moreover, those who do not work on the gaming floor may have less opportunity to visit or have interactions. However, another (perhaps more probable) reason is that all new employees who work at casinos in Massachusetts are mandated to attend staff training where GameSense is discussed. Thus, it is unsurprising that almost all employees expressed awareness of GameSense. In contrast, not all new casino employees interact with a GSA during new staff training and/or go to a GSIC.

That not all player-facing casino employees have engaged with GameSense, despite being aware of its existence, holds important implications for the effective implementation of RG initiatives. Firstly, limited engagement by employees may result in missed opportunities to fully understand and communicate the benefits of GameSense to casino patrons. Employees who haven't interacted with GameSense may lack firsthand experience of its resources and thus may not be able to convey its value to patrons, potentially weakening the impact of the RG program.

This discrepancy could also hinder the casino's ability to create a cohesive and consistent responsible gambling environment. Inconsistencies in employee knowledge and engagement may lead to confusion among patrons seeking information about RG practices. Furthermore, if employees haven't experienced the benefits of GameSense themselves, they may not fully appreciate its role in promoting patron well-being, which can inadvertently affect the overall culture of RG within the casino.

To address these challenges, the casino management could consider a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, enhancing internal communication strategies to emphasize the significance of engaging with GameSense could encourage employees to take advantage of its resources. Providing incentives or recognition for employee involvement could also motivate staff members to interact with GameSense and better understand its offerings. Offering convenient access to GameSense resources and GSAs, such as on-site workshops, can facilitate easier employee engagement. Moreover, integrating GameSense experiences into employee training programs can ensure that all staff members are familiar with its resources and benefits. This would help align the entire player-facing team's understanding of RG practices, resulting in more consistent messaging to customers.

Importantly, the results of the current study can be leveraged to facilitate player-facing employees' engagement with RG initiatives within the casino setting. Firstly, the finding that employees' perceived need to convey accurate RG messages to players is a motivating factor for their engagement suggests a potential avenue for enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives. By emphasizing the direct impact of their interactions on players' understanding of RG, the casino can capitalize on employees' intrinsic motivation to provide accurate information and promote safer gambling behaviors. Additionally, the fact that a considerable number of

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employees visited a GSIC with the intention of being better informed to relay RG information to players reinforces the importance of this resource. This underscores the role of GSIC as a hub for gathering essential knowledge that employees can then pass on to players, creating a multiplier effect for RG messaging throughout the casino environment.

Conversely, the reasons cited for not visiting a GSIC provide valuable insights into potential barriers and opportunities for improvement. The existence of alternative sources of information (knowledge about game mechanics and gaming-related myths) and familiarity with other RG initiatives (PlayMyWay) may suggest a need for clearer differentiation between these resources and the GSIC's unique offerings. Addressing these misunderstandings and showcasing the distinct advantages of the GSIC can encourage a more holistic and comprehensive approach to RG education.

Additionally, we found three distinct groups of employees among those who visited a GSIC, which provides further insight into why some player-facing employees interacted with GameSense while others did not. Specifically, we found that there were employees who endorsed all reasons for visiting a GSIC (Comprehensive Interests), employees who were less likely to visit a GSIC for non-RG reasons, such as to get swag (RG Interests), and employees who visited a GSIC to specifically become better informed to pass information to players (Focused Interests). This finding provides important information for understanding the dynamics of player-facing employees' interactions with GameSense and how to effectively facilitate engagement. That those with Focused Interests consisted of employees who visited the GSIC to be better informed for conveying accurate information to players signifies an existing inclination among some employees to provide reliable information. The presence of such a group suggests that emphasizing the practical impact of their interactions with players (perhaps during new

employee training) and offering easily accessible information could further motivate and facilitate their engagement. Ensuring that employees perceive the GSIC as a hub for valuable knowledge to share with players aligns with their intrinsic motivation to provide accurate information. That other employees with RG Interests were focused on visiting the GSIC to specifically learn about RG, ways to assist patrons facing gambling-related harms, and communicating these insights to players, highlights the potential for specialized training and resources. These employees recognize the importance of addressing gambling-related issues and assisting affected patrons. Catering to this group's interest by offering in-depth resources, workshops, or training sessions focused on handling problem gambling situations can enhance their confidence in effectively promoting RG behaviors among casino visitors.

We conducted a LCA among those player-facing employees who has not visited a GSIC. Findings have potentially important implications for the RG efforts in Massachusetts and the potential benefits for facilitating engagement with GameSense. Specifically, two groups emerged from the data. The fact that employees in both the RG Proficiency Beliefs and the Tempered RG Proficiency Beliefs groups refrained from visiting a GSIC primarily due to their perceived existing knowledge about game mechanics, gambling myths, and familiarity with PlayMyWay signals a significant barrier to their engagement. However, this self-assessment of knowledge may not accurately reflect their true understanding of RG, as indicated by previous research by Gray et al. (2021). This underscores the necessity of offering educational opportunities that transcend employees' self-assessed expertise and address potential gaps in their understanding.

Crucially, the positive outcomes of interactions with GSAs become evident through the finding that employees who engaged meaningfully with GSAs felt more informed about RG. This effect was particularly pronounced when employees had demonstrations or exchanges with

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GSAs, underscoring the value of personal interactions in enhancing employees' comprehension of RG practices. This insight underscores the role of GSAs in not only addressing potential knowledge gaps but also in fostering a culture of ongoing learning and RG promotion within the casino.

Lastly, the finding that employees who visited a GSIC exhibited a clearer understanding of GameSense's purposes compared to those who did not visit carries important implications for the effectiveness of RG initiatives within the casino environment. The observation that GSIC visitors displayed a better comprehension of the program's objectives underscores the role of GSICs as educational hubs, successfully conveying the intended message about RG to those who engage with them. This suggests that GSICs are effective in achieving their goal of educating employees about RG practices and resources.

However, the study also highlights a potential misconception among player-facing employees who believe that GameSense primarily targets individuals with gambling problems. This misunderstanding could be leading some employees to perceive that GameSense is a resource solely for helping distressed players, rather than a comprehensive initiative aimed at promoting RG practices among all players. Addressing this misconception is crucial, because it allows casinos to ensure that employees understand GameSense's broader objective of fostering informed decision-making responsible behavior, and enjoyable gambling experiences for all visitors, regardless of their gambling habits.

Accordingly, it becomes evident that while GSIC visits positively influence employees' understanding of GameSense, there is a need for targeted efforts to clarify the program's scope and purpose. Communication strategies that emphasize GameSense's role in enhancing RG practices for all players, not just those facing gambling-related issues, can rectify this potential

misconception. Ensuring that employees grasp the comprehensive nature of GameSense's objectives can lead to more effective communication with players, promoting a RG culture throughout the casino.

5.3 Referring Players to GameSense

A primary aim of the current research was to shed light on the factors influencing player-facing employees' decision to direct patrons towards GameSense, either through suggesting a visit to a GSIC or advising interaction with a GSA. Informatively, we found that a large proportion (almost two-thirds) of employees had referred patrons to a GSA. The most prevalent motivation for referring patrons was either to learn about voluntary self-exclusion or to engage in the self-exclusion process. Alternatively, employees referred patrons when they suspected signs of a gambling problem. This could indicate that employees at Massachusetts casinos are particularly attentive to identifying players exhibiting signs of distress and are more inclined to intervene in these situations. Additionally, we found that over two-thirds of employees referred patrons to a GSA to understand how games operate. Such a finding helps contextualize Abarbanel et al. (2018), who found the most common topic GSA discussed with player was about game odds. Put differently, one reason why Abarbanel et al. (2018) may have found GSAs most often speak to players about game odds is because players are being referred to them to learn about game odds.

The primary explanation for not referring patrons to a GSA centered around employees not perceiving a pressing "need" to recommend patrons to the program. What remains unclear is the employees' threshold for recognizing distress. The ambiguity lies in identifying the point at which employees consider intervention necessary and refer a player to GameSense. This threshold might differ between employees and casino operators. If the communication to

employees implies intervening only when there is a clear "need", it could inadvertently convey that GameSense is exclusively for those facing gambling-related problems. Consequently, this could contribute to the misconception that GameSense is for players with gambling problems, explaining why one of the most common reasons for referral is when players show signs of distress. To address this, shifting the focus from identifying distressed players to integrating mentions of GameSense into interactions with all players could help normalize conversations and dispel such misperceptions.

Around one-third of employees also indicated difficulties in approaching players about GameSense. They cited concerns about players reacting aggressively or ignoring them when approached. This corresponds with prior research indicating that the fear of upsetting players often deters employees from initiating conversations. Moreover, employees mentioned that players' engrossment in their games made them hesitant to discuss GameSense, fearing anger or dismissal. The hesitation to refer players also stemmed from employees feeling uncomfortable suggesting GameSense or doubting their role in intervening. Earlier studies have revealed the role ambiguity employees face in terms of referring players to RG services or intervening in gambling-related issues (e.g., Abarbanel et al., 2018; Beckett et al., 2020b; Hing & Nuske, 2012). Clarity in communicating expectations to employees and offering guidance on approaching patrons could help alleviate such uncertainty.

In summary, the current research unveils a spectrum of insights concerning employee referrals to GameSense. It underscores the need to emphasize GameSense's broader relevance to all players, reduce misperceptions, and offer support to employees in navigating sensitive interactions. This way, RG can be better integrated into the casino environment, contributing to a safer and more informed gambling experience for all patrons.

5.4 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Comprehensive Specific Player-facing Employee Training.
Develop and implement comprehensive training programs for player-facing employees that go beyond basic awareness of GameSense. Provide detailed information about GameSense's objectives, resources, and its role in promoting RG for all players, not just those facing gambling problems.

Recommendation #2: Address Misconceptions. Design training modules specifically focused on addressing misconceptions that employees may have about GameSense. Highlight that the program is for all players, emphasizing its value in promoting informed decision-making and enhancing the overall gambling experience.

Recommendation #3: Regular Communication with Player-facing Employees.
Encourage player-facing employees to integrate mentions of GameSense into their interactions with all players. Making it a routine part of conversations can normalize discussions about RG and contribute to dispelling misperceptions.

Recommendation #4: Guidelines for Approaching *All* Patrons about RG. Provide clear guidelines on how to approach all patrons about RG in a non-intrusive manner. Offer strategies for initiating conversations and handling potentially difficult situations, addressing concerns employees may have about player reactions.

Recommendation #5: Emphasize Value of Interactions with GSAs. Highlight the positive impact of personal interactions with GSAs on employees' own understanding of RG. Encourage employees to engage with GSAs for continuous learning and to enhance their ability to convey accurate information to players.

Recommendation #6: Regular Refresher Training. Provide regular refresher training (i.e., booster) sessions to reinforce RG messages and to keep employees updated on the latest resources and information offered by GameSense.

Recommendation #7: Promote a Supportive Environment. Foster a supportive atmosphere where employees feel comfortable discussing RG with patrons. Communicate clear expectations and offer guidance on how to navigate challenging conversations.

Recommendation #8: Incorporate Employee Feedback. Establish mechanisms to gather feedback from player-facing employees regarding their experiences with GameSense and their interactions with players. Use this feedback to refine training programs and communication strategies.

Recommendation #9: Increase the Size of GSICs to Include a "Take a Break" Sitting Area. Expanding the footprint of GSICs to include a designated "Take a Break" sitting area aligns with the insight that nearly 30% of employees perceived GameSense as a place for relaxation away from the gaming floor. This enhancement would not only accommodate RG practices, such as taking breaks for patrons, but also provide an innovative platform for interactive engagement with players and employees.

Recommendation #10: Measurement of Impact. Implement a system to measure the impact of employee interactions with patrons about responsible gambling. This could include tracking referrals to GameSense, evaluating changes in player behavior, and obtaining employee feedback on the effectiveness of their interactions.

By implementing these recommendations, casinos can create a more informed and RG environment, improve employee engagement with GameSense, and enhance the overall well-being of their patrons.

5.5 Limitations and Future Directions

The current research presents several noteworthy limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the absence of longitudinal data restricts the comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors influencing employee referrals to GameSense. Longitudinal insights would provide valuable context to comprehend the dynamics that drive (or hinder) employees' decision-making in referring patrons. An extended temporal perspective could reveal shifts in motivations and behaviors over time, offering a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between various variables.

Secondly, it's important to acknowledge the significant presence of missing data, which could introduce biases and impact the overall sample size available for analysis. This reality could potentially skew the findings, leading to results that are disproportionately influenced by the characteristics and viewpoints of those participants who completed the survey in its entirety. The phenomenon of missing data poses challenges in reliably assessing relationships between variables, which could subsequently compromise the validity and generalizability of the study's outcomes.

To address these limitations, future research endeavors should consider strategies to mitigate the impact of missing data, potentially by refining survey length or incorporating mechanisms to encourage complete responses. In terms of participant representation, incorporating a more diverse range of casino employees, including those with limited patron interactions, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of GameSense awareness and engagement. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to illuminate the temporal evolution of employee behaviors and motivations in referring patrons to GameSense. By addressing these limitations, future research endeavors can enhance the robustness and applicability of findings,

leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding responsible gambling promotion within the casino environment.

5.6 Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing player-facing employees' interactions with GameSense within the casino environment. The study's exploration of employee referrals to GameSense has illuminated crucial dynamics that impact RG promotion. Notably, the presence of distinct employee groups - those who visited GSICs and those who did not - revealed differing motivations and perceptions among employees. Employees who visited GSICs demonstrated a clearer understanding of GameSense's purposes, emphasizing the significance of these centers as educational hubs. However, a notable proportion of employees, despite awareness of GameSense, believed it primarily targeted players with gambling problems. This misconception highlights the need for comprehensive education to underscore that GameSense benefits all players, regardless of their gambling habits.

The research also shed light on the challenges employees face when initiating conversations about GameSense with patrons. Difficulties arose from concerns about player reactions, role ambiguity, and uncertainties in identifying distress thresholds. Aligning with previous research, fear of upsetting players often deterred employees from engaging in these discussions. This underscores the importance of fostering a supportive environment that provides employees with clear expectations and guidance for sensitive interactions.

To enhance the effectiveness of RG initiatives, casinos could capitalize on employees' intrinsic motivation to convey accurate information to players. Tailored training programs that address misconceptions and equip employees with the necessary knowledge and skills for RG conversations could bridge existing gaps. Emphasizing GameSense's comprehensive role in

enhancing RG practices for all players could counter the misconception that it solely targets

distressed individuals.

Ultimately, these insights encourage a multifaceted approach. Strengthening

communication, refining training modules, and encouraging employee engagement with GSAs

could collectively foster a more informed and RG culture within the casino environment. By

addressing misconceptions, providing support for sensitive interactions, and fostering employee

engagement, casinos can make meaningful strides towards a safer and more RG experience for

all patrons.

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Appendix A: LCA

Table A1

Fit indices for 2, 3, and 4 class models for those visited and who did not visit a GSIC

Number of groups	BIC	LMRT *p-value*	BLRT *P-value*	Entropy	Class size < 1%
Visited a GSIC					
2	1469.79	< .001	< .001	.83	No
3	1454.06	< .001	< .001	.77	No
4	1486.81	.12	.43	.77	No
Did not Visit a GSIC					
2	544.22	.004	< .001	.72	No
3	559.86	.06	.02	.82	No
4	580.89	.37	.07	.82	No

GameSense: Employee Survey

Present Study: GameSense Employee Survey

Anonymity/Confidentiality The information you provide will be kept confidential. All information gathered will be aggregated (i.e., combined) with the information collected from other participants and used only for research and knowledge translation purposes. All information collected will be stored securely on Qualtrics' servers located in Toronto, and thus not subject to the Patriot Act. The anonymized data will be stored on a password-protected computer at Carleton University where it will remain indefinitely, and not be released to anyone outside the research team. Your name will not be linked to the stored data.

Research personnel: The following people are involved in this study, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:

Dr. Michael Wohl (Principal Investigator; michael.wohl@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2908);
Dr. Nassim Tabri (Principal Investigator; nassim.tabri@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 1727);
Dr. Chris Davis (Principal Investigator; chris.davis@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2251);
Grace Gaudett (Other research personnel; GraceGaudett@cmail.carleton.ca);
Lauren Belyea (Other research personnel; LaurenBelyea@cmail.carleton.ca).

Concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact the Carleton University Ethics Board (ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: We are asking for some input from employees about GameSense. We are interested in your thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers, and the GameSense Advisors. Even if you have never heard of any of these, we welcome your input.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study.

Benefits/Compensation:* We are offering a $10 Amazon.com Gift Card for completing this online survey, which should take you approximately 10 minutes. Your gift card will be emailed to you should you provide us with a valid email address.

Right to withdraw: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer certain questions or to withdraw your data upon completion of the survey. To withdraw your

data, please email the researchers. Upon withdrawal, all your information will be permanently deleted.

 If you would like to withdraw during the study, you may click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of each page. By clicking "withdraw" you will automatically be re-directed to the debriefing page including the links to access support services.

 Data Storing and Sharing: The data will be stored on the computers of the researchers and research assistants involved with this project. As there will be no personal information associated with the data, this dataset will be stored electronically and kept indefinitely. Additionally, we will upload this anonymized dataset to an online data repository called Open Science Framework (http://osf.io/) for research and teaching purposes. Aggregate data may also be used in publications, presentations, and future research. The (fully anonymized) data from this study may be released to journals upon request. Lastly, anonymized data may be shared with trusted colleagues.

 Funding. This research is supported funding from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

 This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board B (Reference #117682) and is being funded by Massachusetts Gaming Commission. The survey has the support of MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC.

By checking this box, you agree to the following terms:

  ○ I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. I understand that I will be compensated with a $10 Amazon.com Gift Card for my participation in this study. My participation in this study is voluntary. (1)

  ○ I do not consent to the study. (2)

Ineligibility Debriefing

Thank you for accessing the GameSense: Employee Survey. It is unfortunate that you do not consent to participate. For more information on the GameSense: Players Survey, please contact the Gaming Lab at Carleton University at gaming.lab@carleton.ca.

Have you heard about GameSense?

  ◯ Yes, I have heard about GameSense. (1)

  ◯ No, I have never heard about GameSense. (2)

I heard about GameSense from...

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

Friends (1)	○	○
Players (2)	○	○
Other casino employees (3)	○	○
A superior/manager (4)	○	○
Casino staff training (5)	○	○
A GameSense Advisor (6)	○	○
Massgaming.com (7)	○	○
Social media (8)	○	○
Print advertisements (9)	○	○
Radio advertisements (10)	○	○
TV advertisements (11)	○	○
Other source (please specify): (12)	○	○

Based on your current understanding of GameSense, what is its purpose?

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

It offers a place where players can relax away from the gaming floor (i.e., a lounge) (1)	○	○
It's a program that teaches players how games work (2)	○	○
It's a program that educates players about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit) (3)	○	○
It offers a place where players can bet on sports (4)	○	○
It's a program that includes PlayMyWay – a budgeting tool that you track your play and receive notifications you get closer to the budget you've set (5)	○	○
It's a program that helps dispel gaming-related myths (6)	○	○
It offers a place players can find where to get support if they believe their gaming has become problematic (7)	○	○
It's a program that allows players to voluntarily exclude themselves from the gaming floor at all casinos in Massachusetts (8)	○	○
Other (please specify): (9)	○	○

GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy.

 GameSense Advisors work at a **GameSense Info Center** located at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the areas of

responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for help. Many GameSense Advisors come to the position with professional gaming experience which is useful in understanding patrons' needs.

I think that the target audience for GameSense is...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
People who have trouble controlling their gaming. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gamble on a regular basis. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who gamble occasionally (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
All people who gamble (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Have you visited a GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC?

○ Yes, I visited the GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (1)

○ No, I have not visited a GameSense Info Center at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)

Please indicate your reasons for visiting a GameSense Info Center

	Response

	Yes (1)	No (2)
I heard about the Info Center and was curious (1)	○	○
I stumbled upon one and was curious (2)	○	○
To learn more about how games work (3)	○	○
To learn more about responsible gaming (e.g., within an affordable money and/or time limit) (4)	○	○
To learn about and enroll in PlayMyWay (i.e., a money budgeting tool for your slot play that works with your rewards card) (5)	○	○
To get swag (e.g., a lanyard) (6)	○	○
To learn about gaming-related myths (7)	○	○
To learn about supports for problem gaming (8)	○	○
To be better informed should I need to pass information to players (9)	○	○
To learn about voluntary self-exclusion (10)	○	○
Other (please specify): (11)	○	○

Please indicate your reasons for NOT visiting a GameSense Info Center

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

No one has asked me to check GameSense out (1)	○	○
I already know how games work (2)	○	○
I already know about gaming-related myths (3)	○	○
I already know about PlayMyWay – a budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play (4)	○	○
I don't think a GameSense Advisor would be able to teach me anything (5)	○	○
I don't think GameSense Advisors help players (6)	○	○
I don't agree with the presence of a GameSense Info Center at the casino (7)	○	○
Other reasons (please specify): (8)	○	○

I would visit a GameSense Info Center if…

	Response	
	Yes (1)	No (2)

My manager asked me to (1)	○	○
A player asked me a question for which I didn't know the answer about how games work (2)	○	○
A player asked me a question about responsible gaming (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit) that I didn't know how to answer (3)	○	○
A player was in distress and I didn't know how to respond (4)	○	○
I wanted learn more about how to gamble responsibly (e.g., playing within an affordable money and/or time limit) (5)	○	○
I could get swag (e.g., a lanyard) (6)	○	○
I wanted to learn more about PlayMyWay – a budgeting tool that allows a player to set a money limit and track their play (7)	○	○
I wanted learn more about gaming-related myths (8)	○	○
I wanted to learn about supports for problem gaming (9)	○	○
I wanted to learn more about voluntary self-exclusion for players (10)	○	○
Other (please specify): (11)	○	○

Have you recommended a customer speak to a GameSense Advisor?

○ Yes, I have recommended a customer speak with a GameSense Advisor. (1)

○ No, I have never recommended a customer speak with a GameSense Advisor. (2)

Approximately, how many customers have you recommended speak with a GameSense Advisor?

_____

When you recommended a customer speak with a GameSense Advisor, how often was it for the following reason(s).

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Almost Always/Always (5)
To have them learn how to play a game. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
So they could get swag (e.g., a lanyard). (2)	○	○	○	○	○
I thought they had a gaming problem. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
To have them learn about gaming-related myths. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
So they could learn about and/or enroll in PlayMyWay. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
So they could learn about voluntary self-exclusion. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
So they could voluntarily self-exclude. (7)	○	○	○	○	○

What was the main reason you recommended a customer speak with a GameSense Advisor?

_____

Why haven't you ever recommended a customer speak with a GameSense Advisor?

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
There has never been a need. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's not my place to do so. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't feel comfortable suggesting that to players. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't believe that GameSense helps players. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players can be aggressive to staff when they recommend speaking with a GameSense Advisor. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players don't respond when you try to engage with them about speaking to a GameSense Advisor. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Players are often too "zoned out" or engrossed in their play to approach them about GameSense. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
GameSense Advisors aren't helpful. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Have you ever had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor (i.e., a trained responsible gaming specialist who works at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC)?

○ Yes, I have had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (1)

○ No, I have never had an interaction with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)

Please indicate the (approximate) number of interactions you have had with a GameSense Advisor at MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC using the following categories (Please respond with a digit; e.g., 10).

☐   Simple (i.e., a short, communication from a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gaming). Number of times = _____ (1)

_____

☐   Demonstration (i.e., a longer, communication from a GameSense Advisor about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works). Number of times = _____ (2)

_____

☐   Exchange (i.e., a two-way communication with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gaming or problem gaming). Number of times = _____ (3)

_____

Now we want you to think about an interaction you have had with a GameSense advisor that has had the greatest influence on your beliefs about gaming or your gaming behavior.

 Please take a moment to think about the most impactful interaction you have had with a GameSense Advisor.

What was the nature of this influential interaction with a GameSense Advisor?

☐   It was a simple interaction (i.e., a short, communication from a GameSense Advisor about issues unrelated to gaming). (1)

☐   It was a demonstration (i.e., a longer, communication from a GameSense Advisor about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works). (2)

☐   I had an exchange with a GameSense Advisor (i.e., a two-way communication with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gaming or problem gaming). (3)

Please tell us a bit more about this influential interaction. Who started the interaction? What was it about?

_____

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor…

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I feel more informed about responsible gaming. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more informed about how gaming games work. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the casino cares about its customers. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage customers to speak with a GameSense Advisor. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would encourage customers to visit a GameSense Info Center. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following items. Because MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC has adopted GameSense ….

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I consider MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC a good place to gamble. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am more trusting of MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am more satisfied with MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have a stronger sense of connection to MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC meets or exceeds my expectations for a gaming operator. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel more loyal to MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel MGM Springfield/EBH/PPC wants its customers to keep their gaming within an affordable limit. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

On the following pages, we are now going to ask you some questions about your beliefs and behaviors as they pertain to gaming.

The following statements have to do with your beliefs and opinions about gaming. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

I believe that...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Slightly Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
Players should be able to walk away from gaming at any time. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should be aware of how much money I spend when I gamble. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It's the player's responsibility to spend only money that they can afford to lose. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should only gamble when they have enough money to cover all their bills first. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gaming is not a good way to make money. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

A player's chances of winning get better after they have lost. (6) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

If someone gambles more often, it will help them to win more than they lose. (7) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

I believe that...

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Sometimes (4)	Frequently (5)	Usually (6)	Always (7)
A player should feel in control of their gaming behavior. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should be honest with their family and/or friends about the amount of MONEY they spend gaming. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should be honest with their family and/or friends about the amount of TIME they spend gaming. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Players should only gamble with MONEY that I can afford to lose. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should only spend TIME gaming that they can afford to spend. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Players should consider the amount of MONEY they are willing to lose BEFORE they gamble. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Players should considered the amount of TIME they are willing to spend BEFORE they gamble. (7)

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Do you gamble?

○ Yes, I gamble. (3)

○ No, I do not gamble. (4)

Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

What is your gender identity?

○ Man (1)

○ Woman (2)

○ Gender-fluid (3)

○ Trans man (4)

○ Trans woman (5)

○ Nonbinary (6)

○ Two-spirit (7)

○ Prefer to specify: My gender is _____ (8)

○ Prefer not to answer (9)

What is your age?

_____

How long have you worked at MGM Springfield? ___ years ____ months

What is your job title at MGM Springfield? _____

Thank you for completing the GameSense Players Survey!

  The information you have provided in this survey will help us provide better tools to promote positive play. Your feedback will help us improve GameSense.

  To receive your $10 Amazon.com Gift Card, please provide an email address below (gift cards will be distributed within 48 hours. We appreciate your patience):

_____

In three and six months from now, we will conduct follow-up surveys. You will receive a $15 Amazon.com Gift Card for completing each follow-up survey.

I grant permission to be contacted for follow-up surveys:

○ Yes, please contact me at the email address listed above (1)

○ Yes, but please contact me at this email address instead (2)

○ No, I would prefer not to be contacted for follow-up surveys (3)

Thank you for participating in this research!

What is the purpose of this research?
This study aims to better understand what casino employees in Massachusetts think about GameSense.

If I have any further questions, please feel free to contact us:
If you have any questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact the research team at gaming.lab@carleton.ca (should you wish to contact us at a later date, please make note of this email address).

More information about GameSense can be found at: https://gamesensema.com

Ethical concerns: This study has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B Reference #117682). If you have any ethical concerns about this study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (ethics@carleton.ca).

Giving GameSense Advisors and Managers Voice:

Feedback About GameSense and the GameSense Evaluation

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Authorship and Acknowledgements

Authorship

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl, Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Carleton University Gambling Laboratory (CUGL) focuses on, among other things, factors that predict disordered gambling (e.g., erroneous beliefs, financial focus), facilitators of responsible gambling (e.g., monetary limit setting and adherence), and means to overcome barriers to behavior change (e.g., nostalgia for life lived before the addictive behavior took hold). Members of CUGL also examine the potential pitfalls and possible harm-minimization utility of rewards program membership. Dr. Wohl is the lead author of this report.

Dr. Christopher G. Davis, Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Dr. Davis' research lies at the intersection of social, personality, and health psychology. In general terms, he explores the social, contextual, and personality factors that influence our psychological health. Relevant to the present context, he studies the psychological factors that affect gambling and substance use behavior. With respect to this report, he was responsible for data analysis and the production of tables and figures, editing drafts of the report, and provided analytic and other support.

Dr. Nassim Tabri, Associate Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory focuses on transdiagnostic risk and maintenance factors for health-compromising behaviors, with a focus on disordered gambling and eating. Another focus of the Mental Health and Addictions Laboratory is on the role of money and financial success in the etiology and maintenance of disordered gambling. Dr. Tabri's contributions to this report included data analysis and the production of tables and figures, reviewing drafts of the report, as well as providing analytic and other support.

Executive Summary

What was the purpose of this evaluation of GameSense?

GameSense Advisors (GSAs) and GameSense Managers (GSMs) are the face of the GameSense responsible gambling program at the three casinos in Massachusetts. Among other things, they talk to patrons about how to gamble responsibly and about support services should their gambling become problematic (e.g., voluntary self-exclusion). They also offer demonstrations to patrons about how games work and how to minimize the risks associated with gambling. The purpose of the current study was to better understand the experiences of GSAs and GSMs. Specifically, we asked GSAs and GSMs about the extent to which regular players are aware of and engage with GameSense, their reactions to the main findings of assessments of regular player and casino employee engagement with GameSense (undertaken by the current research team), and the perceived utility of the recommendations put forward to improve GameSense in Massachusetts. Lastly, we asked GSAs and GSMs to express what they perceived as the successes of GameSense and any challenges they have experienced implementing GameSense. Ultimately, the present study was designed to give GSAs and GSMs voice in the ongoing evaluation and evolution of GameSense in Massachusetts.

How were data collected and analyzed?

Design and Participants. We employed a mixed methods approach. First, the population of GSAs (*N*=21) and GSMs (*N*=3) in Massachusetts were recruited through the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health GameSense listserv to complete an online survey. Subsequently, three in-person focus groups were conducted with approximately half of all GSAs (*n*=10), and one online focus group was conducted with all GSMs (*n*=3). We were not able to include all GSAs in the focus group sessions due to scheduling conflicts.

Data Analysis. Descriptive (summary) statistics were calculated from the survey data to gain an initial understanding of GSA and GSM perceptions of the extent to which regular players are aware of and engage with GameSense, reactions to the main findings of assessments of regular players and casino employee engagement with GameSense (undertaken by the current research team), and the perceived utility of the recommendations put forward to improve GameSense in Massachusetts. During the focus groups, both facilitators diligently took extensive notes capturing the discussions. These notes served as our primary data source. Subsequently, the notes were rigorously read and re-read to identify recurring patterns, key concepts, and underlying themes. Through iterative analysis, common meanings emerged, allowing for the extraction and interpretation of central themes that encapsulated participants' perspectives and experiences.

What did we find?

Survey Insights

Perceived GameSense Awareness and Engagement. On average, GSAs and GSMs estimated that approximately two-thirds (70.3%) of regular players (i.e., patrons who have visited a casino in Massachusetts at least three time in the last 3 months) are aware of GameSense, and 43.5% engage with GameSense. However, there was a large variance in estimates, suggesting that GSAs and GSMs are not uniform in their estimates. Moreover, the true percentage of patrons who are aware of GameSense or who engage with GameSense is unknown. Thus, it is difficult to gauge the accuracy of GSA and GSM estimates. However, understanding GSA and GSM estimates are important because it helps contextualize their feelings about the utility of GameSense.

Perceptions of the Type of Interaction GSAs and GSMs are Having with Players. GSAs and GSMs estimated that, on average, 52.0% of their interactions with all players are demonstrations, and 45.5% are exchange interactions. They also stated that simple interactions often pave the way for meaningful ones, with an estimated 53.8% of simple interactions evolving into demonstrations or exchanges.

Response to Researcher-Generated Recommendations. Based on the results of a survey the research team conducted of regular players at the three casinos in Massachusetts (see Wohl et al., 2024a) as well as a survey of front-line casino employees in Massachusetts (see Wohl et al., 2024b), recommendations for improving engagement with GameSense were created and provided to MGC. GSAs and GSMs were asked for their feedback about these recommendations.

GSAs and GSMs endorsed recommendations for increasing player engagement, with collaborative (with the casino) promotions, enhanced GameSense Information Center (GSIC) visibility, and interactive activities receiving strong support. For employee engagement, collaborative initiatives and feedback loops garnered strong support. Most GSAs and GSMs (80.9%) perceived there will be challenges with the introduction of sports betting, anticipating an increase in gambling-related issues and acknowledging the need for enhanced educational resources and support. Two-thirds highlighted the importance of ongoing education initiatives to keep them well informed.

GSA Focus Group Insights

Perceived Success of GameSense. GSAs were asked to reflect on what they perceived to be some of the most successful or rewarding aspects of GameSense and of their work as a GSA. Two themes emerged: 1) deep interpersonal connections that have been built with players, and 2) players shifting from seeing GSAs as a potential adversary to trusted ally**.**

Perceived Challenges with Implementing GameSense. Three themes emerged in terms of challenges GSAs experience implementing GameSense. These were: 1) difficulty with research and engaging with players, in part, due to misperceptions among players that imply GameSense is solely for people with a gambling problem, 2) players are often vulnerable during moments of significant loss, requiring tact and sensitivity (i.e., GSAs navigate multifaceted roles, serving as counselors and facing blame for losses), and 3) there are operational challenges with the voluntary self-exclusion program including players not understanding the duration and rules associated with voluntary self-exclusion, which is exacerbated with phone interactions.

Means to Improve Player Engagement with GameSense. Based on a recent study on players in Massachusetts, GSAs were told that although players know about GameSense, very few engage in deeper interactions (demonstration and/or exchange) with GSAs or use the tools available (e.g., PlayMyWay). We then asked them to discuss how engagement can be increased. They suggested there was a need to 1) reduce stigma about using GameSense and responsible gambling tools, 2) improve the accessibility of the responsible gamble tools (e.g., PlayMyWay) by simplifying enrollment and providing more real-time feedback on their budget limit, 3) improve the physical location and accessibility of GameSense Information Centers, and 4) increase community engagement about GameSense.

Means to Improve Employee Engagement with GameSense. Based on a recent study with casino employees in Massachusetts, GSAs were told that there was relatively low employee engagement with GameSense. They were asked how to increase employee engagement. Three themes emerged: 1) there is a need to expand employee training beyond the 30 minutes allocated during new employee training, 2) there is a need for employee re-training opportunities, and 3)

there is a need to increase opportunities for GSA-casino employee interaction to build their relationship.

Perceived Support for Doing their Job as a GSA. We asked GSAs the extent to which they feel supported. They expressed a strong sense of support from the casino-based responsible gambling team (i.e., those who work for the casino to ensure they are compliant with Massachusetts responsible gambling regulations). However, there was also a tendency to express that casino management viewed GameSense as a threat to the success of their casino, which creates challenges. GSAs reported positive experiences with the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health, highlighting regular updates, encouragement for attendance in seminars, and openness to feedback. However, they did note that support in the form of more GameSense staff (i.e., increasing the number of GSAs) was desired.

Feelings About Compensation for Doing their Job. GSAs generally expressed satisfaction with compensation (i.e., pay) but desire improved health benefits. They also expressed concern about increased workload due to sports betting, emphasizing the need for them to receive education and training about sports betting, additional resources to contend with the additional workload.

GSM Focus Group Insights

Perceived Successes of GameSense. Akin to the GSAs, the GSMs were asked to reflect on what they perceived to be some of the most successful or rewarding aspects of GameSense and of their work as a GSM. Four themes emerged: 1) the voluntary self-exclusion program is very successful helping players in need, 2) there is a diversity in the GameSense team (i.e., GSAs and GSMs), allowing guests to see themselves represented in the GameSense team, 3) GameSense evolving to meet the changing needs of players, and 4) a positive transformation in

the casino management's perception of GameSense, whereas previously seen as the "enemy," most casinos now demonstrate significant buy-in.

Perceived Challenges GSMs have with GameSense. GSMs expressed a few challenges they have encountered in their role. They expressed a need to: 1) reduce patron skepticism and stigma about GameSense (i.e., overcoming the (mis)perception that GameSense is solely for problem gamblers), 2) increase staffing and resource allocation (i.e., GSMs expressed challenges in obtaining adequate staffing and support for the GSICs), 3) improve communication and collaboration with the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health (MACGH) about GameSense administration and promotion, and 4) create a partnership with the casino management about advancing responsible gambling.

Means to Improve Player Engagement with GameSense. Akin to the GSAs, the GSMs were told that although players know about GameSense, very few engage in deeper interactions (demonstration and/or exchange) with GSAs or use the tools available (e.g., PlayMyWay). We then asked them to discuss how engagement can be increased. They suggested there is a need: 1) for more and better community outreach about the purpose of GameSense, 2) for improved GameSense project management, focus, and prioritization (e.g., more efficient project initiation, development, and completion), 3) to improve GameSense employee satisfaction and retention (i.e., despite strong affection for GameSense, frustrations with project management and incomplete initiatives led to employee dissatisfaction and turnover), and 4) for internal casino outreach and education (i.e., continuous education of casino personnel, including refreshers) to keeping casino staff informed about GameSense initiatives and responsible gambling practices.

GSM's Feelings About Their Job. GSMs expressed that their pay had not changed, despite the significant expansion of the skill set required for the evolving gambling landscape in Massachusetts.

What are some take home messages?

GSAs and GSMs highlighted key areas for attention and improvement by MGC. GSAs underscored the success of relationship-building and the voluntary self-exclusion program while facing challenges in overcoming negative perceptions and streamlining operational processes. Survey feedback suggests the need for destigmatizing GameSense, improving tools like PlayMyWay, and enhancing community engagement. On the other hand, GSMs emphasized the success of the voluntary self-exclusion program, positive transformations in the casino's perception of GameSense, and the diverse makeup of the GameSense team. However, they encounter challenges with guest skepticism, staffing issues, and communication with MACGH. Their recommendations for the MGC include prioritizing educational efforts, streamlining operational processes, increasing community engagement, fostering collaboration, and ensuring robust support for both GSAs and GSMs. These measures collectively aim to enhance the effectiveness of the GameSense program, making it more player-friendly and impactful in promoting responsible gambling.

What do GSAs and GSMs recommend?

1. *Strengthen Educational Outreach*: Focus on destigmatizing GameSense through targeted educational campaigns. Emphasize the role of GameSense in responsible gambling education for all players to increase engagement.

2. *Optimize Tools and Accessibility*: Improve existing tools like PlayMyWay for better accessibility. Consider strategic placement of GameSense Information Centers on gaming floors to enhance visibility and accessibility.

3. *Boost Community Engagement*: Enhance community outreach efforts, forming partnerships with local organizations. Integrate multilingual support for diverse communities to improve communication and accessibility.

4. *Innovate to Combat Stigma*: Develop innovative strategies to combat guest skepticism and stigma associated with GameSense. Position GameSense as a pioneering force in responsible gambling, exceeding industry standards.

5. *Streamline Communication and Collaboration*: Address challenges related to communication and collaboration between GSMs and the casino, but particularly with the MACGH. Foster a more streamlined communication process, emphasizing transparency, and ensuring frequent program evaluations and climate surveys.

6. *Increased Support for GSAs and GSMs*: Recognize unique challenges faced by GSAs and GSMs, providing continuous education, streamlined project management, and strategies for employee satisfaction and retention.

7. *Strengthen Leadership and Team Dynamics*: Implement effective leadership strategies to boost morale among GSMs, addressing concerns related to project management and ensuring a positive work environment.

8. *Monitor Workload and Resource Allocation*: Regularly assess workload distribution for GSAs, considering resource allocation challenges with the potential expansion of the GameSense program.

9. *Annual "Voice" Assessment by a Third-Party*: To ensure the ongoing credibility and effectiveness of the GameSense program, it is recommended that the Massachusetts Gaming Commission engage a third-party entity for annual evaluations. This practice will provide an impartial assessment, reinforcing transparency and facilitating continuous program enhancements.

What have we learned?

Insights from the survey and focus groups with GSAs and GSMs illuminate the strengths and challenges of implementing GameSense in Massachusetts. The findings emphasize the dynamic nature of player-GSA interactions, the significance of collaboration between GSMs and MACGH, and the imperative for adaptability in navigating the evolving gambling landscape. GSAs and GSMs expressed that continuous assessment of GameSense, and subsequent refinement will be pivotal in ensuring sustained program success.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the gambling industry has witnessed unprecedented growth, captivating audiences across the globe with innovative technologies and immersive experiences. As the gambling landscape evolves, so does the need for responsible gambling practices to help protect the well-being of players. Put differently, as gambling platforms and experiences become more sophisticated, so do the potential risks associated with excessive or problematic gambling behavior. Increasingly, the gambling industry is stepping up its duty of care to foster responsible gambling practices. Responsible gambling initiatives, for instance, have gained prominence as a proactive approach to address these concerns and help safeguard the well-being of players. One such initiative is GameSense—a responsible gambling program developed by the British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC). The program aims to empower players with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about their gambling activities. Specifically, the objective of GameSense is to enhance player awareness and promote responsible gambling behaviors (e.g., setting and adhering to a pre-set money limit) and offering problem gambling support services (e.g., voluntary self-exclusion).

In response to the expansion of gambling in Massachusetts, regulatory provisions were instituted requiring newly licensed gaming operators to dedicate on-site facilities to independent counseling services addressing substance abuse, compulsive gambling, and mental health concerns. To comply with this legal mandate, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) implemented the GameSense program, which is operated autonomously by the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health (MACGH)—a statewide non-profit entity.

GameSense Advisors (GSAs) and GameSense Managers (GSMs) are instrumental actors within the GameSense program. GSAs are at the forefront of player interaction both on the gaming floor and at on-site resource areas called GameSense Information Centers (GSICs). The primary role of GSAs is to engage with players and provide them with educational resources and tools to help them make informed decisions about their gambling activities. For instance, among other tasks, GSAs will try to engage players in an exchange interaction—marked by two-way communication about responsible or problem gambling. In a similar vein, GSAs may try to interact with players by way of a demonstration that explains the mechanics of gaming, responsible tools available to players, and related concepts like gambling-related myths.

GSMs operate at a managerial level, orchestrating the integration of GameSense within the broader gambling establishment. Their responsibilities include overseeing the training and deployment of GSAs, implementing and refining program protocols, and liaising with other stakeholders to promote the holistic success of the initiative. As custodians of the program's strategic vision, GSMs reinforce the successes and navigate the challenges at an organizational level, shaping the overarching culture of responsible gambling within a given casino.

As Massachusetts endeavors to maintain a robust responsible gambling framework, understanding the experiences, successes, and challenges encountered by GSAs and GSMs becomes paramount. This is because they are the face of GameSense at the three casinos in Massachusetts as they interact directly with players and implement the program's principles on a day-to-day basis. Their experiences offer unique insights into the practical challenges and successes encountered in promoting responsible gambling behaviors. By delving into the perspectives of GSAs and GSMs, a nuanced understanding of how the program translates from theory to practice can be gained and areas for improvement can be identified. Moreover, their

experiences and observations provide a real-world context, offering a practical foundation for refining and enhancing the GameSense initiative to better align with the dynamic and evolving landscape of the gambling industry.

In essence, the experiences of GSAs and GSMs serve as a crucial guide for shaping the future trajectory of responsible gambling programs and contribute to the ongoing discourse on player well-being in the gambling community. Although the body of knowledge on player and casino employee perceptions of GameSense has grown in recent years (e.g., Abarbanel et al., 2019; Abarbanel et al., 2022; Gray et al., 2020; Louderback et al., 2022a; Louderback et al., 2022b; Wohl et al., 2024a, Wohl et al., 2024b), a notable gap in this literature is studies examining the experiences of the individuals who directly deliver GameSense to players and casino employees (i.e., GSAs and GSMs). Specifically, there is a dearth of research investigating GSAs' and GSMs' perceptions regarding the program's efficacy in promoting responsible gambling behaviors, its overall success, and the challenges they encounter in implementing it effectively.

We contend that the absence of studies that provide voice to GSAs and GSMs cannot (and should not) be filled by existing research that has given voice to those who work in other support settings, such as safe injection sites (e.g., Perlmutter et al., 2023) or bars (Gehan et al., 2020). This is because the dynamics of GSAs and GSMs within the casino environment are notably distinct. One fundamental distinction lies in the primary goal of GSAs and GSMs, which centers on the prevention of gambling-related harm. Unlike scenarios where support is primarily reactive to immediate risks or harms, such as overdose prevention or addressing intoxicated patrons, GSAs and GSMs proactively engage in educational efforts aimed at all players to promote responsible gambling behaviors. Their focus is on fostering an environment where

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players are empowered with knowledge and strategies to gamble responsibly, thereby mitigating the likelihood of problematic gambling behaviors emerging in the first place.

Additionally, the nature of the gambling environment introduces unique challenges and considerations for GSAs and GSMs. Unlike settings where addictive behaviors may manifest more visibly or immediately, such as in substance use contexts, identifying and addressing gambling-related harm in a casino environment can be inherently complex. The discretionary nature of gambling, coupled with the allure of potential rewards, requires GSAs and GSMs to navigate subtle cues and behaviors to effectively engage players in discussions about responsible gambling practices. Moreover, the social and recreational nature of gambling activities may present additional barriers to recognizing and addressing problematic behaviors, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to prevention and support within the gambling industry.

Understanding the successes and challenges experienced by GSAs and GSMs is paramount to the success of the GameSense program. GSAs, as the frontline advocates, navigate the complex terrain of player interactions, translating program principles into tangible educational experiences. Their successes may reveal the program's efficacy in fostering player self-awareness and responsible gambling behaviors. Conversely, their challenges may illuminate areas where the program may face resistance or encounter obstacles, providing insights into potential refinements to the GameSense program.

On a managerial level, GSMs coordinate the macro-level integration of GameSense within the casino and the wider community, and their successes and challenges may shed light on the organizational support structures necessary for program success. Their experiences may highlight not only the impact of GameSense on individual players but also the broader institutional factors that influence the program's effectiveness. Their experiences are essential for

refining strategies, implementing targeted training, and adapting the program to evolving industry landscapes. Ultimately, we hoped that by delving into the experiences of GSAs and GSMs it may provide information that can be used by MGC to refine and optimize responsible gambling initiatives for a safer and more enjoyable gambling environment.

To the point, a gap in knowledge exists regarding GSA and GSM perceptions and experiences implementing GameSense. This gap underscores the need for a study that gives voice to those directly involved in the delivery of this responsible gambling program. To this end, we conducted a survey of GSAs and GSMs as well as a series of focused interviews with these GameSense ambassadors. By engaging directly with those on the front lines of the GameSense initiative, this report seeks to synthesize their insights—insights that can inform the future development and refinement of the GameSense program.

1.1 Study Overview

The primary purpose of the present study was to give GSAs and GSMs voice about the successes and challenges they face implementing GameSense. From dispelling misconceptions about the nature of gambling (e.g., the odds of winning) to discussing support services with players who may be experiencing gambling-related problems by way of directly interacting with players on the gaming floor or at the GSIC, GSAs and GSMs play a pivotal role in shaping the gaming environment at casinos in Massachusetts. The present study sought to provide GSAs and GSMs with a platform to shed light on the intricacies of their roles, providing insights that can potentially inform program enhancements and further align GameSense with the evolving needs of players in Massachusetts. To that end, we surveyed the full population of GSAs and GSMs and conducted a series of focus groups with a subset of GSAs and a focus group with all GSMs.

1.1.1 Research Questions

1. How do GSAs and GSMs perceive the impact of the GameSense program on players? More specifically, does GameSense meet its objective to enhance player awareness and promote responsible gambling behaviors (e.g., setting and adhering to a pre-set money limit) and offering problem gambling support services (e.g., voluntary self-exclusion)?

2. What are the primary challenges faced by GSAs and GSMs?

3. In what ways do GSAs and GSMs believe the GameSense program could be refined to improve its utility?

In analyzing the results, our main aim was to ensure that GSAs and GSMs were given a platform to express their perspectives and experiences. Hence, it is crucial to highlight that our role as researchers was solely to facilitate this process. Consequently, we intentionally refrained from adding any personal commentary or interpretation to the results presented. By doing so, we aimed to maintain the integrity of the voices shared by the GSAs and GSMs, ensuring that their thoughts and feelings remained authentic and unfiltered. Moreover, the recommendations stemming from the present study originate directly from the insights and observations voiced by the GSAs and GSMs themselves. We emphasize that these recommendations are not formulated or endorsed by the research team; rather, they represent the genuine needs and desires expressed by the GSAs and GSMs. Our approach underscores our commitment to centering the voices of GSAs and GSMs.

2. Method: Participants and Procedures

A mix-method design was employed to assess the thoughts and feelings GSAs and GSMs operating within the Massachusetts casinos have about GameSense. First, we conducted an online survey of the population of GSAs (N=21) and GSMs (N=3). To this end, a link to the survey was distributed by MACGH via their GSA/GSM listserv. Surveys were completed

between October 2nd and 10th, 2023. The survey did not distinguish between GSAs and GSMs. A $20 Amazon.com gift card was provided as remuneration.

Second, focus group discussions were conducted with a subset of GSAs at the three distinct casinos in Massachusetts (*n*=10). We were only able to conduct focus groups with a subset of GSAs due to scheduling difficulties. Focus group sessions with GSAs were conducted on October 27th and 28th, 2023. A separate focus group with all GSMs was conducted online on November 8th, 2023. As remuneration for participating in the focus groups, each attendee was provided $20 cash.

It is important to note that the researchers did not tape record or directly quote from the focus group sessions. This was because in the context of a small, easily identifiable population (as is the case herein), it is crucial to prioritize confidentiality and privacy. Recording or directly quoting from a focus group could breach the trust and privacy of participants, especially if their identities or sensitive information could be revealed. Participants may not feel comfortable expressing their opinions candidly if they thought words or phrases may be quoted (which, rightly or wrongly, may be attributed to them). Thus, in collaboration with MGC (and the Research Review Committee, in particular), it was decided to employ an alternative method— note-taking and summarizing key points anonymously—to maintain confidentiality while still capturing valuable insights from the discussion. To help maintain the anonymity of the GSAs and GSMs who completed the survey and those who participated in the focus groups, we did not analyze the data by site (i.e., casino) at which they work.

2.1 Survey of GSAs and GSMs

The aim of the survey was to assess the perceived impact of the GameSense program on players through the perspectives of GSAs and GSMs. To help answer Research Question 1, we

assessed the extent to which GSAs and GSMs believe patrons are aware of and interact with GameSense, along with their perceived understanding of the GameSense program's purpose among those who are aware. Additionally, we sought insights into the interactions GSAs and GSMs are having with players. For instance, we asked GSAs and GSMs to estimate the proportion of simple interactions that became more meaningful interactions about responsible gambling or support services, or both. Lastly, we presented recommendations generated by the research team aimed at enhancing both player and casino employee engagement with the GameSense program. Through our survey, we sought not only to understand current perceptions but also to gather feedback on potential strategies for improvement, thereby facilitating continuous enhancement of the GameSense program's effectiveness.

All GSAs (*N*=21) and GSMs (*N*=3) completed the survey. To facilitate anonymity of responses (due to the low number of GSAs and GSMs), we did not ask them to report what casino they worked at, and we asked for the participant's age using age ranges. Seven (33.3%) indicated they were 25-34, nine (42.9%) reported an age between 35 and 44, three (14.3%) noted they were 45-54, and two (9.6%) were 55+. Three participants (12.5%) did not indicate their age range. We also asked how long they worked as a GSA or GSM. Five (25%) noted they have been employed as a GSA or GSM for less than 6 months. Two (10%) noted being employed for 6 months to a year, while six (30%) noted working as a GSA or GSM for 1-2 years, four (20%) for 3-5 years, and three (15%) for 5 or more years.

2.1.1 Perceived GameSense Awareness and Engagement

On average, GSAs and GSMs estimated that approximately two-thirds (70.3%) of regular patrons are aware of GameSense, and that 58.3% of regular players believe GameSense is for all players. In terms of engaging with GameSense to learn about responsible gambling, GSAs and

GSMs estimated that 43.5% of regular players do so, whilst estimating that 36.9% of regular players engage with GameSense for information on supports for problem gambling. It is important to note that the standard deviation of responses was rather high (18.9 to 25.9), suggesting considerable variability in perceptions about player awareness and engagement with GameSense among GSAs and GSMs. See Table 1 for a summary.

Table 1

Perceived Awareness and Engagement

	Mean %	*SD*
What percent of regular players are aware of GS?	70.3	18.9
What percent of regular players correctly believe GS is for all players?	58.3	24.7
What percent of visits to a GSIC are because regular players want to learn more about RG?	42.5	25.8
What percent of visits to a GSIC are because regular players want to learn about supports for problem gaming?	36.9	25.9

2.1.2 Perceptions of the Type of Interactions GSAs and GSMs are Having with Players

In Massachusetts, interactions are categorized as simple (i.e., a short communication from a GSA about issues unrelated to gambling), a demonstration (i.e., a longer communication from a GSA about how a game, responsible gambling tool, or concept works), or an exchange (i.e., a two-way communication with a GSA about responsible gambling or problem gambling). Because we were interested in having GSAs and GSMs estimate the percent of meaningful interactions they were having with players, we asked them to only estimate the percentage of

interactions they were having that could be categorized as either a demonstration or an exchange (see Table 2).

GSAs and GSMs estimated that, on average, 52% of their interactions with players are demonstrations, whilst 45.5% of their interactions were exchange interactions. It is important to note that an exchange interaction can turn into a demonstration interaction and vice versa. In other words, these two types of interactions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One patron could be counted as having both a demonstration and an exchange interaction.

2.1.2.1 Estimated Percent of Simple Interactions That Became a Meaningful Interaction. Simple interactions initiated by GSAs or GSMs may serve as a conduit for more substantial demonstrations or exchanges related to responsible gambling. Specifically, these casual interactions (that are not gambling-related) may build a foundation of trust and familiarity between the GSA and the player, creating a comfortable environment for more in-depth discussions about gambling. We asked GSAs and GSMs to estimate the percent of simple interactions they have had that translated into a demonstration or exchange interaction. They reported that over half (53.8%) of simple interactions have led to more meaningful conversations about responsible gambling or problem gambling, or both.

Table 2

Estimate of the Type of Interaction Had with Patrons

	M	SD
What percentage of your interactions with players could be considered a demonstration interaction?	52.0	25.5
What percentage of your interactions with players could be considered an exchange interaction?	45.5	24.6
What percentage of simple interactions can you translate into demonstration or exchange interactions?	53.4	27.9

2.1.3 Response to Researcher-Generated Recommendations

Based on the results of a survey the research team conducted of regular players at the three casinos in Massachusetts (see Wohl et al., 2024a) as well as a survey of front-line casino employees in Massachusetts (see Wohl et al., 2024b), recommendations for improving engagement with GameSense were created and provided to MGC. To help answer Research Question 3 (i.e., in what ways should GameSense be refined?), we asked for feedback from GSAs and GSMs about these recommendations.

2.1.3.1 Response to Recommendation About Increasing Player Engagement. First, we provided GSAs and GSMs with a researcher-generated list of recommendations to increase patron engagement with GameSense. GSAs and GSMs were asked to indicate whether the recommendation would or would not work, whether they were already implementing what we suggested (and it works), or they were already implementing or tried to implement what we suggested (and it does not work). See Table 3 for a summary of the results.

The most highly endorsed recommendations in terms of those who indicated the recommendation would work or that our recommendation was already being implemented and it works were:

1. Collaborate with promotions (e.g., coordinate with casino marketing and promotions teams to integrate GSIC information into ongoing casino promotions; 100%, $n = 21$)

2. Enhance the visibility of GSICs (e.g., give them a more prominent location in the casino environment; 95.2%, $n = 19$),

3. Promote interactive activities (e.g., organize interactive activities or games within GSICs to attract patrons and encourage them to engage with responsible gambling resources; 90.5%, $n = 20$),

4. Integrate information about the GSIC onto apps (e.g., make information about GSIC locations, services, and benefits more visible on the casino's mobile app; 90.5%, $n = 19$), and

5. Use social media (e.g., use social media platforms to share success stories, testimonials, and engaging content related to GSIC visits; 90.5%, $n = 19$).

The recommendation that was least endorsed was hosting guest speakers (i.e., arranging talks or presentations by experts on responsible gambling topics to draw patrons' attention to GSICs). Although 61.9% ($n=13$) of GSAs and GSMs indicated that this was a good idea, 38.1% ($n=8$) indicated that guest speakers will not increase patron engagement with GameSense.

Table 3

GSA and GSM Responses to Recommendations to Increase Engagement Among Patrons

Recommendation	Yes, I think this will work	We already do this, and I think it works	No, I don't think this will work	We already do this, and I think it doesn't work
Offer Informative Workshops: Conduct workshops or sessions to casino patrons that highlight the benefits of visiting a GSIC and provide insights into responsible gambling practices.	38.1% (*n*=8)	28.6% (*n*=6)	33.3% (*n*=7)	0% (*n*=0)
Promote Interactive Activities: Organize interactive activities or games within GSICs to attract patrons and encourage them to engage with responsible gambling resources.	19.0% (*n*=4)	76.2% (*n*=16)	4.8% (*n*=1)	0% (*n*=0)
Enhance the visibility of GSICs: Give them a more prominent location in the casino environment.	61.9% (*n*=13)	28.6% (*n*=6)	9.5% (*n*=2)	0% (*n*=0)
Collaborate with Promotions: Coordinate with marketing and promotions teams to integrate GSIC information into ongoing casino promotions.	76.2% (*n*=16)	23.8% (*n*=5)	0% (*n*=0)	0% (*n*=0)
Host Guest Speakers: Arrange talks or presentations by experts on responsible gambling topics to draw patrons' attention to GSICs.	61.9% (*n*=13)	0% (*n*=0)	38.1% (*n*=8)	0% (*n*=0)
Utilize Social Media: Use social media platforms to share success stories, testimonials, and engaging content related to GSIC visits.	61.9% (*n*=13)	28.6% (*n*=6)	0% (*n*=0)	9.8% (*n*=2)
Offer Incentives: Provide casino incentives such as discounts, giveaways, or reward program points for players who have an RG-based interaction with a GSA or GSM.	42.9% (*n*=9)	28.6% (*n*=6)	23.8% (*n*=5)	4.8% (*n*=1)
Integrate GSIC Info on Apps: Make information about GSIC locations, services, and benefits more visible on the casino's mobile app.	81.0% (*n*=17)	9.5% (*n*=2)	4.8% (*n*=1)	4.8% (*n*=1)

Leverage Patron Feedback: Actively seek input from patrons to tailor GSIC offerings to their preferences and needs.	60.0% (*n*=12)	15.0% (*n*=3)	25.0% (*n*=5)	0% (*n*=0)
Cross-Promote with Amenities: Collaborate with dining, shopping, or other amenities within the casino to cross-promote GSICs.	61.9% (*n*=13)	4.8% (*n*=1)	33.3% (*n*=7)	0% (*n*=0)
Implement Ambassador Programs: Train select casino staff to serve as GSIC ambassadors, guiding patrons toward GSIC visits.	42.9% (*n*=9)	23.8% (*n*=5)	33.3% (*n*=7)	0% (*n*=0)
Provide Virtual Tours: Offer virtual tours or online previews of GSICs to encourage patrons to explore in-person.	66.7% (*n*=14)	0% (*n*=0)	33.3% (*n*=7)	0% (*n*=0)
Add a "Take a Break" sitting area: Increase the size of the GSIC to have a dedicated "Take a Break" sitting area that would be advertised as a place where players can take a break from gambling.	65.0% (*n*=13)	15.0% (*n*=3)	15.0% (*n*=3)	5.0% (*n*=1)

Note. N per answer shifts due to missing data on some items

2.1.3.2 Response to Recommendation About Increasing Employee Engagement.

Akin to the recommendations for increasing player engagement, we provided GSAs and GSMs a list of researcher-generated recommendations to increase employee engagement with GameSense. Once again, GSAs and GSMs were asked to indicate whether the recommendation would work, the recommendation would not work, they are already implementing what we suggested (and it works), or they are already implementing or tried to implement what we suggested (and it does not work). See Table 4 for a summary of the results.

The most highly endorsed recommendations in terms of those who indicated the recommendation would work or that our recommendation is already being implemented and it works were:

1. Collaborative Initiatives (i.e., encouraging collaboration between GSAs and GSMs on the one hand and various casino departments on the other hand to reinforce the importance of responsible gambling). Almost all GSAs and GSMs (94.7%; $n = 18$) endorsed this recommendation, whilst only 5.3% did not believe this would work.

2. Feedback loop (i.e., establishing a feedback mechanism where casino employees can share their experiences with GSAs and suggest areas for improvement). A clear majority (89.5%; $n = 17$) mentioned that this would be a means to engage employees.

3. Employee wellness focus (i.e., positioning responsible gambling interactions as part of overall casino employee wellness, emphasizing the positive impact on their work environment). A total of 89.7% ($n = 17$) liked this recommendation, with 14 of those individuals noting that this was a novel idea that would increase employee engagement with GameSense.

It should be noted that several other recommendations were highly endorsed as well, including integrating responsible gambling topics into existing training programs (84.3%), regular workshops or training sessions with employees (84.2%), encouraging managers to lead by example by engaging with GameSense (84.2%), and specialized training for front-line casino employees (84.2%).

The recommendations that did not receive high endorsement were:

1. Team Challenges (i.e., organizing team-based challenges or competitions that encourage casino employees to seek information from GSAs and apply it in their interactions). Only 47.3% of GSAs and GSMs endorsed this recommendation, while 52.7% did not.

2. Recognition Programs (i.e., establishing a casino employee recognition program that acknowledges and rewards those who actively engage with GameSense and promote it). A low 21% of GSAs and GSMs endorsed this recommendation, while 78.9% did not believe this was a viable way to increase employment engagement with GameSense.

Table 4

GSA and GSM Response to Recommendations to Increase Engagement Among Employees

Recommendation	Yes, I think this will work	We already do this, and I think it works	No, I don't think this will work	We already do this, and I think it doesn't work
Mandatory Training: Make interactions with GSAs or GSMs a mandatory part of casino employee training, emphasizing the importance of responsible gambling education.	26.3% (*n*=5)	52.6% (*n*=10)	10.5% (*n*=2)	10.5% (*n*=2)
Regular Workshops: Conduct regular workshops or training sessions for casino employees on the benefits of interacting with GSAs and promoting responsible gambling.	52.6% (*n*=10)	31.6% (*n*=6)	15.8% (*n*=3)	8.2% (*n*=0)
Recognition Programs: Establish casino employee recognition programs that acknowledge and reward those who actively engage with GSAs and promote responsible gambling.	10.5% (*n*=2)	10.5% (*n*=2)	78.9% (*n*=15)	0.0% (*n*=0)
Team Challenges: Organize team-based challenges or competitions that encourage casino employees to seek information from GSAs and apply it in their interactions.	36.8% (*n*=7)	10.5% (*n*=2)	47.4% (*n*=9)	5.3% (*n*=1)
Referral Rewards: Offer rewards or incentives to casino employees who successfully refer players to GSAs for responsible gambling assistance.	57.9% (*n*=11)	21.1% (*n*=3)	15.8% (*n*=4)	5.3% (*n*=1)
Educational Campaigns: Launch casino educational campaigns that highlight the role of GSAs and GSMs and the value of their interactions in enhancing the casino environment.	68.4% (*n*=13)	10.4% (*n*=2)	21.1% (*n*=4)	0..0% (*n*=0)
Managerial Support: Encourage casino managers to lead by example and engage with GSAs themselves, setting a precedent for their teams.	47.4% (*n*=9)	36.8% (*n*=7)	15.8% (*n*=3)	0.0% (*n*=0)
Cross-Training: Integrate responsible gambling topics into existing training programs to create a holistic approach to employee education.	63.2% (*n*=12)	21.1% (*n*=4)	10,5% (*n*=2)	5.3% (*n*=1)
Feedback Loop: Establish a feedback mechanism where casino employees can share their experiences with GSAs and suggest areas for improvement.	89.5% (*n*=17)	0.0% (*n*=0)	10.5% (*n*=2)	0.0% (*n*=0)

Specialized Training: Provide specialized training to front-line casino employees on how to effectively approach players about responsible gambling and refer them to GSAs and GSMs.	42.1% (*n*=8)	42.1% (*n*=8)	10.5% (*n*=2)	5.3% (*n*=1)
GSA Open House: Organize regular open house sessions where GSAs interact with employees, share insights, and build relationships.	57.9% (*n*=11)	21.1% (*n*=4)	21.1% (*n*=4)	0.0% (*n*=0)
Peer Mentoring: Implement a peer mentoring program where experienced casino employees guide newcomers on responsible gambling interactions.	63.2% (*n*=12)	5.3% (*n*=1)	31.6% (*n*=6)	0.0% (*n*=0)
Collaborative Initiatives: Encourage collaboration between GSAs and GSMs and various casino departments to reinforce the importance of responsible gambling.	57.9% (*n*=11)	36.8% (*n*=7)	0.0% (*n*=0)	5.3% (*n*=1)
Employee Wellness Focus: Position responsible gambling interactions as part of overall casino employee wellness, emphasizing the positive impact on their work environment.	73.9% (*n*=14)	15.8% (*n*=3)	10.5% (*n*=2)	0.0% (*n*=0)

Note. N per answer shifts due to missing data on some items

2.1.4 Perceptions about the Evolving Gambling Landscape in Massachusetts

As Massachusetts continues to reshape its gambling landscape (i.e., the introduction of mobile and retail sports betting), it is important to understand whether GSAs and GSMs believe these changes will affect the level of problem gambling in the Commonwealth as well as affect how GameSense is offered. Consequently, we asked them to respond to four items about the changing gambling landscape in Massachusetts. Specifically, we asked them to indicate (on a 5-point Likert scale) the extent to which they believe that the introduction of sports betting: 1) will increase gambling-related issues, 2) will require GSAs and GSMs to adapt current educational strategies, and 3) will require GSAs and GSMs to provide additional educational resources and support for players. We also asked whether they believe GSAs and GSMs are adequately informed and educated to handle the evolving gambling landscape.

Almost all GSAs and GSMs agreed that additional education resources will be needed to support players (90.5%). There was also a high level of agreement that legalized sports betting will increase gambling-related issues among players (80.9%) and that the legalization will present challenges for GSAs and GSMs (76.2%). Two-thirds of GSAs and GSMs were confident that they were adequately informed and educated about how to handle the evolving gambling landscape. See Table 5 for a summary.

Table 5

Percent Agreement Regarding Specific Concerns About the Evolving Gambling Landscape in

Massachusetts

Item:	n	M (SD)	% agreement
I am concerned that the introduction of mobile and retail sports betting has increased gambling-related issues among players	21	4.14 (1.11)	80.9%
The evolving gambling landscape presents challenges that may require GSAs and GSMs to adapt current educational strategies	21	4.19 (0.81)	76.2%
I believe the introduction of sports betting has required GSAs and GSMs to provide additional educational resources and support for players	21	4.43 (0.68)	90.5%
I am confident that GSAs and GSMs are adequately informed and educated to handle the evolving gambling landscape	21	3.95 (1.02)	66.7%

Note. All responses were on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). % agreement refers to the percentage who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed (i.e., selected option 4 or 5 of 5-point Likert scale).

2.2 Focus Group Results: GSAs

A couple of weeks after completing the survey, two members of the research team (MW & CD) conducted an in-person focus group with GSAs at each of the three casinos and one virtual focus group with GSMs. It was decided to conduct the GSM meeting virtually because the GSMs are dispersed across Massachusetts.

We conducted focus groups alongside the survey because focus groups provide a valuable complementary dimension to understanding the experiences, successes, and challenges of GSAs and GSMs in their roles (i.e., Research Question 2). Although the surveys offered insightful quantitative data, focus groups can delve deeper into the GSAs and GSMs experiences, allowing them to express their thoughts, share anecdotes, and provide nuanced perspectives. Focus groups facilitate a dynamic discussion where participants can interact with each other,

potentially revealing shared concerns, alternative viewpoints, and deeper context to survey responses. This qualitative approach captures a range of their experiences not captured by the earlier survey. Additionally, the interactive nature of focus groups encouraged participants to elaborate on their responses, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the issues faced and potential solutions. Combining survey data with insights from focus groups creates a more holistic and informed basis for decision-making and improvement initiatives in the context of GSAs' and GSMs' professional experiences.

What follows is a summary of the GSA focus groups. Any commentary or recommendations noted come from the GSAs. The research team has tried to remain objective in its summary of the focus groups. Recall, the purpose of the focus groups was to give the GSAs voice. Thus, we have tried to minimize any interpretation of their voice, instead letting what they noted stand on its own.

2.2.1 Perceived Success of GameSense by GSAs

Focus group participants were asked to reflect on what they perceived to be some of the most successful or rewarding aspects of GameSense and of their work as a GSA. The responses from the focus group participants revealed a couple themes related to the perceived successes and rewarding aspects of their roles as GSAs. They are summarized below:

1) Deep interpersonal connections have been built with players. GSAs often described engaging in deep conversations with players about gambling issues and positioning themselves as a supportive presence, offering breaks during play to prevent excessive gambling. They noted that this approach extends beyond mere interactions about responsible gambling because GSAs see themselves as a trusted resource for various player concerns, even beyond gambling.

2) Players shifting from seeing GSAs as a potential adversary to trusted ally. Several focus group participants emphasized the significance of building personal relationships with players over time, leading to more meaningful discussions about gambling, thus highlighting the gradual shift from negative perceptions to positive associations. They also noted the effectiveness of various responsible gambling initiatives, including the voluntary self-exclusion program. GSAs expressed satisfaction in being able to provide valuable information to gamblers about responsible gambling practices, contributing to a positive perception of RG efforts within the casino environment.

The human aspect of their role as GSAs emerged as a recurring theme, emphasizing the satisfaction derived from helping patrons and being a voice of reason. GSAs find reward in educating individuals about responsible gambling behaviors, explaining game mechanics, and utilizing strategies like the 4-2-1 approach for effective communication.

In summary, GSAs underscored the importance of relationship-building, the transformation of perceptions, the effectiveness of responsible gambling initiatives, and the inherent reward in the human aspect of the GSA role.

2.2.2 Perceived Challenges with Implementing GameSense by GSAs

We also asked focus group participants about some of the most significant challenges that they faced in their efforts to assist players with responsible gambling. Emergent themes are summarized below:

1) There is often difficulty reaching and engaging players. A common challenge expressed by GSAs concerned reaching those who may need assistance but are reluctant to initiate a conversation about gambling (responsible or problematic). They noted that this challenge is compounded by the (mis)perception among some players that (1) GSAs are

adversaries rather than supportive figures promoting responsible gambling, and (2) being seen speaking with a GSA implies that that player has a gambling problem, which is stigmatizing.

2) Players are often vulnerable during moments of significant loss. GSAs noted that they often find themselves interacting with individuals at their lowest points, particularly when players are attempting to recover losses by chasing further wins. Dealing with such situations requires tact and sensitivity. Misperceptions and misunderstandings also emerge as challenges, with players expressing skepticism about the fairness of games and questioning the credibility of GSAs. Overcoming these misperceptions and establishing trust is a recurring difficulty. Moreover, because the role of GSAs is multifaceted, encompassing responsibilities that extend beyond providing information on responsible gambling, GSAs often find themselves in the position of counselors and support figures while facing challenges such as being blamed for losses and the misconception that they work for the casino (and thus cannot be trusted).

3) There are operational challenges related to the voluntary self-exclusion program. GSAs mentioned issues with the duration of exclusion, confusion surrounding voluntary self-exclusion rules, and difficulties associated with the conversion of voluntary self-exclusion to sportsbook exclusion. Additionally, the lack of coordination between GSA systems and casino systems poses challenges, particularly regarding the reenrollment of players following voluntary self-exclusion. Phone interactions present their own set of challenges, with a preference for in-person communication as it humanizes the experience. The confusion caused by the presence of the GameSense phone number on ATMs, especially in the context of online betting, is highlighted as an area for improvement. Specifically, because the GameSense phone number is posted on the ATMs, players often mistakenly believe that 1) GameSense owns and operates the

ATMs (which causes responsible gambling message confusion) and/or 2) GSAs can provide ATM tech support.

In summary, focus group responses reveal that challenges faced by GSAs encompass interpersonal dynamics, misperceptions, operational issues, and the multifaceted nature of their role. GSAs noted that recognizing and addressing these challenges is crucial for refining the effectiveness of GameSense in promoting responsible gambling and addressing the needs of players in a complex gambling landscape.

2.2.3 GSA Reaction to Player and Employee Survey Results

We highlighted some of the results from the surveys we conducted with regular players (Wohl et al., 2024b) as well as front-line casino employees (Wohl et al., 2024a) and asked GSAs for their reaction to those results. We did so to probe why, despite a high level of awareness of GameSense, they think so few players take advantage of the products and services that GameSense provides. We also asked for input about how to increase the number of meaningful interactions (demonstration or exchange, or both) players have with GSAs. Below are several key themes expressed by participants.

2.2.3.1 Perceived means to improve engagement with players. First, we told GSAs that our surveys with players suggest that most know about GameSense, but very few engage in deeper interactions (demonstration or exchange, or both) with GSAs or use the tools available (e.g., PlayMyWay). We then asked them to discuss how engagement can be increased. They noted the following ways:

1) Reduce stigma and increase education to combat it. A prevalent theme is the stigma associated with GameSense, where players are anxious about being labeled as having a gambling problem if they engage with GSAs or use the available tools. This perception hampers patrons'

willingness to participate in deeper interactions. GSAs noted the importance of conducting demonstrations to counteract the stigma. They emphasize the need for ongoing education, framing GameSense in a non-threatening manner, and ensuring that players understand the purpose and functionality of the tools available, such as the PlayMyWay program.

2) Improve RG tool accessibility. Concerns about the effectiveness of existing tools, such as PlayMyWay, were highlighted by the GSAs. They suggested reworking the mobile app to simplify the sign-up process, improving accessibility, and providing more real-time feedback on budget limits. The current flaws, including the continuation of play after reaching the budget limit, were seen as counterproductive.

3) Improve the physical location and accessibility of GSICs. The location of GameSense Information Centers (GSICs) was considered a potential obstacle, contributing to the reluctance of players to seek assistance. Suggestions included placing GSICs on the gaming floor and creating a more welcoming environment, such as a lounge area, to encourage players to take breaks and discuss responsible gambling.

4) Increase community engagement and multilingual support. To address expanded gaming (e.g., sports betting) and increase the visibility of GameSense, GSAs proposed community outreach efforts, including partnerships with local organizations and increased presence in (social) media. Additionally, there was a recognized need for greater language and cultural sensitivity, suggesting the integration of employees who speak different languages to assist in translating and connecting with diverse communities.

2.2.3.2 Perceived means to address misconception that GameSense is for problem gamblers. We then told GSAs that many players and employees think that the main reason for GameSense is to help problem gamblers. We asked them whether this was true according to their

experience, why they think this misunderstanding exists, and what can be done to address this misconception. Analysis elucidates several themes:

1) **Reduce stigma about GameSense.** A prevalent theme is the existence of a stigma attached to GameSense, primarily stemming from the perception that it is solely focused on addressing problem gambling. Participants attribute this misunderstanding to the way GameSense is portrayed in advertisements and marketing materials. The consensus is that the educational component of GameSense needs to be emphasized separately from problematic gambling, positioning it as a resource for all players, including those seeking information about the games and how they work.

2) **Improve communication with casino employees.** GSAs highlighted the crucial role of casino employees in shaping player perceptions. There was consensus that employees often direct players to GameSense only when they suspect a gambling problem, neglecting to recommend it for general education about games. To address this, participants suggest incorporating information about GameSense on casino video boards and implementing direct communication channels with employees, ensuring that they are well-informed about the broader educational aspects of GameSense.

3) **Increase visibility of GameSense and space allocated to GameSense Information Centers.** GSAs expressed a need for improved visibility and recommended regular get-togethers with employees and incorporating GameSense activities during these sessions. Additionally, the GSAs stress the importance of physical space, citing challenges in dealing with more than one person at a time. Suggestions offered by GSAs included creating lounges where players can engage with GameSense advisors in a relaxed setting, away from the gaming floor. They also

expressed a need for an (aesthetically pleasing and relaxing) space where they have confidential one-on-one discussions with players about problem gambling and support services.

4) There are limitations to online chat service. GSAs acknowledged the difficulty of explaining the multifaceted nature of GameSense through online chat services. They expressed a need for alternative communication methods or a refined approach to effectively convey the diverse roles and services offered by GameSense.

5) Restructure employee training. GSAs suggested restructuring employee training sessions to incorporate GameSense information more prominently. They also recommend creating dedicated spaces and opportunities for engagement, such as monthly employee gatherings and lounges where players can learn about GameSense in a more casual setting.

In summary, analysis highlighted the need to combat the stigma associated with GameSense by emphasizing its educational components, improving employee communication, enhancing visibility through various channels, and creating inviting spaces for meaningful interactions. Implementing these strategies could help broaden the understanding of GameSense and encourage a more diverse range of players to engage with its services.

2.2.3.3 Perceived means to improve engagement with casino employees. Because there was relatively low casino employee engagement with GameSense, we asked GSAs whether there are ways to engage employees to advance the goals of GameSense and challenges they currently experience when trying to engage employees. The focus group responses shed light on aspects of casino employee training regarding GameSense and suggest opportunities for enhancement. The following themes emerged:

1) Need to expand employee training. GSAs highlight the limitation of the current employee training, emphasizing that it is only 30 minutes long and provided during new

employee onboarding. There was consensus that the training needs to extend beyond this initial

session, with a focus on providing refreshers. Additionally, GSAs suggested that the training

should cover a broader range of topics, including not only the basics of GameSense but also

ongoing discussions about what employees are observing and the information they might need to

assist players more effectively.

2) Need for re-training opportunities. GSAs mentioned that setting up a desk in the

employee break room may be a practical way to enhance accessibility and encourage interactions

with GameSense. They also suggested the need for re-training sessions, acknowledging that

employees may benefit from ongoing education and reinforcement of GameSense principles. The

idea of facilitating events and roundtable discussions was proposed as an alternative to

traditional re-training, fostering open conversations about employee experiences and insights

related to player interactions.

There was also a suggestion to integrate refreshers during Responsible Gambling

Education Month events. GSAs envisioned this as an opportunity for open conversations and

discussions rather than a formal re-training session, allowing for a more collaborative and

interactive approach.

**3) Increase opportunities for GSA-casino employee interaction to build their

relationship.** GSAs highlighted the importance of making employees aware of GSICs and

creating a culture that encourages employees to seek out GameSense resources for ongoing

learning and support. A noted challenge was that many employees are stationary (i.e., dealers

stay behind the gaming table) and thus may have difficulty accessing GameSense resources.

They noted that although efforts are made to go to stationary employees, GSAs expressed

concern about the physical layout, such as the corral, making it challenging for employees to engage with GameSense.

In summary, GSAs expressed a need for enhanced accessibility, extended training duration, and ongoing support mechanisms for casino employees regarding GameSense. They emphasized the importance of physical presence, open dialogues, and the integration of refreshers into existing events to ensure continuous education and empowerment of employees in assisting players responsibly.

2.2.4 Perceived Support for Doing their Job as a GSA

We asked GSAs the extent to which they feel supported. We first asked them the extent to which they feel supported within the casino environment and then asked them the extent to which they feel supported by the Massachusetts Council on Gambling and Health. Only one theme was generated, which reflected feeling they are supported. GSAs expressed a strong sense of support within the casino environment, particularly from those responsible for regulatory compliance. A positive relationship was highlighted, with frequent interactions, support from various departments, and inclusion in casino events. The Responsible Gambling team actively collaborates with GSAs, sending individuals for discussions on disordered gambling and facilitating referrals, such as for voluntary self-exclusion. These interactions contribute to a sense of integration within the broader casino community. However, GSAs note a challenge in the perception of their role, especially in online chat interactions, where some individuals mistakenly view them as customer support for the casino rather than impartial advisors focused on responsible gambling education.

Regarding support from the MACGH, GSAs report positive experiences. Specifically, GSAs noted that MACGH provides regular updates, actively encourages attendance in seminars

and training sessions, and prioritizes education on interactions with underrepresented communities and those facing discrimination. MACGH's openness to feedback is acknowledged, fostering a collaborative and constructive relationship. Despite recognizing a hierarchy, GSAs find this understanding and acceptance of organizational dynamics reasonable. Overall, the support from both the casino environment and external organizations contributes to an environment where GSAs feel empowered and equipped to fulfill their responsibilities in promoting responsible gambling and assisting players effectively.

2.2.5 GSA's Feelings About their Job

Lastly, we asked GSAs about resourcing of GameSense and their overall satisfaction with their job. They provided valuable insights into various aspects of compensation, resource allocation, and challenges faced by GSAs. The following themes emerged:

1) Satisfaction with their compensation and benefits. GSAs generally express satisfaction with their compensation (i.e., pay), highlighting the provision of holiday pay. However, there was a notable desire for better benefits, particularly in terms of health benefits, indicating that improvements in non-monetary aspects of compensation are sought.

2) Adequacy of resource allocation but expansion of gambling may stretch those resources. GSAs acknowledged that the current funding for GameSense is adequate, but they foresee potential challenges if the program expands to another casino as well as the expansion of gambling in Massachusetts (e.g., sports betting), indicating a need for additional resources in such cases. They appreciated the consideration of their input in cost-related decisions but expressed a desire for more budget allocation, especially for personnel (i.e., the need to hire additional GSAs).

3) Workload strain on the horizon. Related to the need to hire additional GSAs, they noted the introduction of sports betting as a significant factor impacting workload and the need for additional resources. Increased numbers of interactions, including voluntary self-exclusions, calls, and online chats, contribute to heightened demands on GSAs' time and energy. Indeed, GSAs identified specific challenges related to the nature of their roles, such as the need for a dedicated position for online chat interactions due to their length and complexity. Balancing various responsibilities, including floor duties, desk work, phone calls, and chats, is described as draining, indicating a need for additional support or a re-evaluation of workload distribution.

4) Need for additional training and education. There was a recognized need for more education and training, particularly in understanding certain terms and concepts (e.g., for sports betting). GSAs express a desire for regular meetings to enhance communication, address misunderstandings, and improve their overall understanding of expectations and terminology.

5) Challenges present with the casino. Some focus group members noted that they perceived that some casino staff see GSAs as a threat to the casino's revenue. One or two individuals noted that they had overheard casino staff referring to GSAs as "the enemy." This perception, along with the feeling of being an afterthought, raises challenges in the relationship between GSAs and casino management.

In summary, GSA responses highlight a mix of satisfaction and challenges in the resourcing of GameSense. Although compensation is generally viewed positively, there are specific needs for additional benefits, more budget allocation for personnel, and better support in addressing the challenges posed by sports betting and evolving responsibilities.

2.3 Focus Group Results: GSMs

Two members of the research team (MW & CD) conducted a single online focus group with all GSMs (*n*=3). It was decided to conduct the GSM meeting virtually because the GSMs are dispersed across Massachusetts. To help answer Research Question 2, the same discussion prompts used with the GSAs were used with GSMs. Because the purpose of the focus group was to give GSMs voice, we did not attempt to direct the conversation to cover all the questions we asked the GSAs. Below we outline the topics we were able to cover in the allocated one-hour session. Note, however, that the session ran almost 2 hours. The GSMs had a lot to say, and we wanted to give them the opportunity to express their thoughts. This sentiment was also expressed among GSAs.

As with the reporting of the focus groups with GSAs, any commentary or recommendations noted come from the GSMs. The purpose of this focus group was to give GSMs a voice. Thus, we have tried to minimize any interpretation of their voice, instead letting what they noted stand on its own.

2.3.1 Perceived Successes of GameSense by GSMs

Akin to the GSAs, the GSMs were asked to reflect on what they perceived to be some of the most successful or rewarding aspects of GameSense and of their work as a GSM. The responses from the focus group participants reveal several themes related to the perceived successes and rewarding aspects of their roles as GSAs. They are summarized below:

1) The voluntary self-exclusion program is successful. GSMs highlighted the success of the voluntary self-exclusion program as a significant achievement. The program was praised for its non-intimidating, non-accusatory or belittling nature, offering a unique approach that contrasts with procedures in other states. The emphasis is on making individuals feel less like

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they are in trouble, contributing to a more approachable and supportive environment for responsible gambling interventions. All three GSMs were proud of the supportive approach taken towards voluntary self-exclusion in Massachusetts.

2) There is diversity in the GameSense team. GSMs expressed pride in the diversity of the GameSense team, reflecting the broader diversity within the casino. This inclusivity allows guests to see themselves represented in the GameSense team, fostering a sense of connection and understanding. The diverse makeup of the team is considered a positive and impactful aspect of their role.

3) GameSense is an ever-evolving program. The dynamic nature of GameSense and its ability to evolve in response to changes, both in technology and external factors like COVID-19, was highlighted. GSMs see themselves as driving positive changes and innovations within the program. The commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation to new challenges is considered a rewarding aspect of their role.

4) There has been a positive shift in the casino's perceptions of GameSense. GSMs noted a positive shift in the casino's perception of GameSense. In contrast to GSAs, GSMs expressed that the past perception of being seen as adversarial to the success of the casino has transformed to the point that the casinos now generally see significant buy-in for the GameSense program. This shift indicates a successful integration and collaboration between GameSense and the casino, emphasizing a more harmonious relationship focused on responsible gambling.

In summary, GSMs highlighted the voluntary self-exclusion program's success, the importance of diversity within the GameSense team, the adaptability and evolution of GameSense, and the positive transformation in the casino's perception of GameSense.

2.3.2 Perceived Challenges GSMs Have with GameSense

The responses from the GSMs shed light on various challenges encountered in their role. We summarize them below:

1) Patron skepticism and stigma about GameSense. A recurring theme is guest skepticism about GameSense due to its perceived association with the casino operator. Another challenge expressed was the need to overcome the perception that GameSense is solely for problem gamblers and emphasizing its availability for all players. Addressing the stigma associated with problem gambling was also noted, requiring persistent efforts and a personable approach to break down barriers.

2) There are staffing and resource allocation challenges. GSMs expressed challenges in obtaining adequate staffing and support from management for the GSIC. Concerns about resource allocation and the need for more transparency in decision-making processes, particularly regarding projects like the Augmented Reality initiative, were highlighted. They noted that difficulty in keeping the center open, covering staff absences, and understanding resource allocation decisions pose operational challenges.

3) There is a need to improve communication and collaboration with MACGH. Issues related to communication and the relationship with the MACGH were prominent. GSMs expressed the need for more collaboration with MACGH, emphasizing the importance of candid conversations. There is a perceived disconnect between MACGH working remotely and the on-site operations, leading to feelings of being misunderstood. This disconnect was noted as a factor in morale issues—feeling undervalued. GSMs emphasize the need for candid conversations, suggesting that surface-level solutions and lack of follow-through contribute to a decline in morale. Concerns about upper management's attendance and commitment to meetings indicate a desire for more effective leadership and team support. There was a desire for more frequent

program evaluations and climate surveys. GSMs expressed a need for centralized messaging and autonomy in decision-making, advocating for a streamlined communication process and more independence in executing GameSense initiatives. They noted challenges that arise from conflicting instructions and a perceived lack of responsiveness from external organizations.

4) Need to strengthen the partnership with the casino management. There was a desire to strengthen the partnership with casino management, to exceed industry standards as it relates to responsible gambling programming, and to pioneer innovative approaches to help players gamble responsibly. GSMs stressed the importance of collaboration for events and experimenting with new strategies to distinguish GameSense as a unique and pioneering program in the responsible gambling landscape.

In summary, GSMs noted challenges related to guest perceptions, staffing, communication with MACGH, team morale, and the need for innovation. Their recommendations include transparent communication, addressing staffing concerns, fostering a positive work environment, and enhancing collaboration with external partners to ensure the continued success and impact of the GameSense program.

2.3.3 GSMs' Reaction to Player and Employee Survey Results

Akin to the GSA focus groups, we wanted to highlight some of the results from the surveys we conducted with regular players (Wohl et al., 2024b) as well as front-line casino employees (Wohl et al., 2024a) and asked GSMs for their reactions to those results. Due to time pressures, however, we were only able to ask GSMs to comment on the survey results that suggest very few regular players engage with GSAs in deeper interactions (demonstration or exchange, or both) or use the tools available. We asked for input about how to increase the

35

number of meaningful interactions (demonstration or exchange, or both) players have with GSAs. The following themes were identified:

1) **There is a need for more and better community outreach.** GSMs emphasized the importance of community outreach as a central strategy for increasing player engagement with GameSense. This includes initiatives such as going to malls, visiting schools to educate children about responsible gambling (despite challenges and pushback), and engaging with diverse linguistic communities. The need for a centralized structure for outreach efforts was highlighted, along with the call for more thoughtful resource allocation, considering linguistic diversity. Improved coordination and collaboration between outreach directors, GameSense managers, and representatives from the MACGH were suggested to enhance the effectiveness of outreach initiatives.

2) **Need for improved management of GameSense projects.** GSMs expressed frustration with the multitude of projects on their plate, some of which are unrelated to GameSense, and the challenge of completing projects. This theme highlights the need for improved project management, focus, and prioritization within the GameSense program. They suggested that a more targeted approach would be helpful to ensure that projects are initiated, developed, and brought to successful completion. This theme underscores the importance of efficiency and strategic planning in the execution of initiatives to enhance the overall effectiveness of the GameSense program.

3) **Need for improved GameSense employee satisfaction and retention.** GSMs expressed a strong affection for the GameSense program, but the frustrations related to project management and incomplete initiatives have led to employee dissatisfaction and, in some cases, staff turnover. This theme highlights the importance of addressing employee satisfaction and

retention within the GameSense team. It emphasizes the need for a supportive work environment, streamlined processes, and effective management to retain experienced staff and sustain a positive team dynamic.

4) Need for internal casino outreach and education. Recognizing the importance of internal outreach, GSMs emphasized the need to educate casino employees and provide ongoing training. This theme suggests the significance of continuous education, including refreshers in addition to new hire orientation, to keep casino staff informed about GameSense initiatives and responsible gambling practices. Internal outreach serves as a strategy not only for employee education but also for fostering a collaborative relationship between GameSense and other casino departments.

2.3.4 GSMs' Feelings About their Job

Lastly, we asked GSMs about resourcing of GameSense. We had limited time (this issue was raised during the last few minutes of the focus group) and thus, more may have been mentioned if there was more time. However, in the time dedicated to this issue, GSMs noted that their pay had not changed even though the skill set required to be a GSM has expanded greatly over the years, in part, due to the changing gambling landscape in Massachusetts.

Each of our focus groups (with GSAs and with GSMs) went well beyond the intended time limits—not because we had too many questions to ask but rather because participants had a lot they wanted to express. At the conclusion of the focus groups with both GSAs and GSMs, participants spontaneously expressed their desire for more such meetings. The anonymous nature of the meetings and the fact that we were independent gave participants the confidence to speak freely with the hope that their voices would be heard. The GSAs and GSMs are proud of the work that they are doing, and they sincerely hope that their suggestions to improve GameSense

will be given due consideration. As the gambling landscape continues to evolve in Massachusetts, they expressed a desire for more of these focus groups in the future.

3. Discussion

In the current research, we surveyed GSAs and GSMs and then followed up with focus groups with these GameSense ambassadors. By directly involving individuals actively engaged in the GameSense initiative, this report aims to consolidate their perspectives, offering valuable insights to guide future enhancements and adjustments to the GameSense program. Moreover, the purpose was to give GSAs and GSMs voice about the successes and challenges they face implementing GameSense.

The survey aimed to evaluate the perceived impact of the GameSense program on players from the perspectives of GSAs and GSMs, addressing Research Question 1. Specifically, the purpose of the survey was to get a breadth of knowledge about the perceived effectiveness of the GameSense program in Massachusetts. We did so by exploring the extent to which they believed patrons were aware of and engaged with GameSense. GSAs and GSMs estimated that approximately two-thirds of regular players are aware of GameSense and approximately half of all regular patrons have had a demonstration and/or exchange interaction with a GSA. Moreover, GSAs felt that more than half of simple interactions lead to more meaningful demonstrations or exchanges, indicating the potential for gradual progression in responsible gambling discussions.

GSAs and GSMs provided specific recommendations for increasing patron and employee engagement. Collaborative initiatives, enhancing GSIC visibility, promoting interactive activities, integrating information into apps, and using social media were strongly endorsed by GSAs and GSMs. These recommendations highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to maximize outreach and impact. As Massachusetts undergoes changes in its gambling landscape,

GSAs and GSMs foresee increased gambling-related issues and acknowledge the need for additional educational resources to support players. The evolving gambling landscape necessitates continuous education and training for GSAs and GSMs to ensure they are well-equipped to address emerging challenges effectively.

We then conducted focus groups with GSAs and GSMs (separately) to gain depth in understanding their experiences and perspectives, and to give them voice about the future of GameSense in Massachusetts. GSAs expressed positive sentiments regarding their relationships within the casino environment. They highlighted good rapport with casino Responsible Gambling representatives and participation in various casino events. However, challenges arose from the misconception among patrons that GSAs are primarily customer support (e.g., for ATM-related problems), pointing to the need for improved clarity of their role. GSAs also reported satisfactory support from the MACGH. The MACGH provided updates, training opportunities, and welcomed feedback. Although acknowledging hierarchical considerations, GSAs expressed a need for more education and better understanding of MACGH terminology.

The resourcing of GameSense emerged as a significant theme. GSAs appreciated compensation but expressed concerns about budget constraints, especially with the introduction of sports betting. Suggestions included additional staff, specialized positions, and improved working conditions to enhance morale.

Many of the themes expressed by GSAs were echoed by GSMs. However, there were some differences. GSMs highlighted successes such as the non-intimidating voluntary self-exclusion program, whilst GSAs noted some operational challenges with the program (e.g., confusion about some players about the rules and difficulties associated with the conversion of voluntary self-exclusion to sportsbook exclusion). Additionally, whilst GSMs expressed a

positive shift in casino perception towards GameSense, they also expressed that some casino staff still see GSAs as a threat. The variation in beliefs about casino buy-in may be that the two groups are interacting with different casino-staff groups. Specifically, GSMs were referring to casino management, including employees of the casino whose job it is to meet responsible gambling regulations in Massachusetts (e.g., those who work in responsible gambling compliance), whilst the GSAs were referencing employees who work on the gaming floor (e.g., dealers). Lastly, although GSAs noted feeling supported by MACGH, GSMs (i.e., those who are directly responsible for the management of the program at the three casinos) expressed internal challenges including concerns about resource allocation and a desire for clearer communication from the MACGH, and the need to have their voices regularly heard (e.g., about how to increase engagement with patrons).

Lastly, both GSAs and GSMs suggested a need for targeted efforts in marketing and messaging to dispel the myth that GameSense is solely for problem gamblers. They argued that education and awareness campaigns should be prioritized, emphasizing its contribution beyond problem gambling mitigation. Internal strategies, such as regular employee gatherings and reconsideration of GSIC locations, may contribute to altering public perceptions and encouraging proactive engagement.

3.1 Summary of GSA and GSM Recommendations

Based on their survey responses and focus group insights, GSAs and GSMs offered several recommendations:

1. *Strengthen Educational Outreach*: Prioritize efforts to destigmatize GameSense, emphasizing its role in responsible gambling education for all players. Invest in ongoing

education campaigns to clarify misconceptions, particularly focusing on the non-threatening nature of the program.

2. ***Optimize Tools and Accessibility:*** Address concerns raised by GSAs regarding the effectiveness of existing tools, such as PlayMyWay. Invest in the reworking of mobile apps for simplicity, accessibility, and real-time feedback on budget limits. Consider strategic placement of GameSense Information Centers on gaming floors for improved accessibility.

3. ***Boost Community Engagement***: Boost community outreach efforts, including collaborations with local organizations, to increase visibility. Prioritize partnerships to engage diverse linguistic communities, integrating employees who speak different languages to enhance communication and accessibility.

4. ***Innovate to Combat Stigma***: Develop innovative strategies to combat guest skepticism and the stigma associated with GameSense. Pioneer new approaches to distinguish GameSense as a unique and pioneering program in responsible gambling, exceeding industry standards.

5. ***Streamline Communication and Collaboration***: Address challenges related to communication and collaboration between GSMs and the casino, but particularly with MACGH. Foster a more streamlined communication process, emphasizing transparency, and ensuring frequent program evaluations and climate surveys (i.e., assessments of GSA and GSM perceptions and experiences of the workplace environment; e.g., leadership, communication, job satisfaction).

6. ***Increased support for GSAs and GSMs***: Acknowledge the unique challenges faced by GSAs and GSMs. Provide additional support and resources, including opportunities for

continuous education, streamlined project management, and strategies for employee satisfaction and retention.

7. ***Strengthen Leadership and Team Dynamics***: Implement effective leadership strategies to improve morale among GSMs. Strengthen internal team dynamics by addressing concerns related to project management, ensuring completion of initiatives, and providing ongoing support for a positive work environment.

8. ***Monitor Workload and Resource Allocation***: Regularly evaluate workload distribution for GSAs, particularly with the introduction of sports betting. Ensure adequate resource allocation, considering the potential challenges associated with the expansion of the GameSense program.

9. ***Annual "Voice" Assessment by a Third-Party***: To further enhance the transparency and credibility of the GameSense program evaluation, it is strongly recommended that the Massachusetts Gaming Commission consider engaging a third-party entity to conduct similar comprehensive assessments on an annual basis. The feedback from both GSAs and GSMs highlighted the value they placed on having an impartial third party conduct the evaluation, fostering a sense of trust and objectivity. Annual evaluations conducted by an external entity can provide ongoing insights into the program's strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring a consistent and unbiased approach to the assessment process. This practice not only maintains a commitment to transparency but also demonstrates a proactive stance in continuously refining the GameSense program to meet evolving needs and challenges within the gambling landscape.

3.2 Conclusion

The purpose of the research outlined in the current report was to provide GSAs and GSMs voice in the evaluation of the GameSense program in Massachusetts. GSAs and GSMs offered valuable insights that illuminate both the successes of GameSense and areas for enhancement. GSAs and GSMs underscored the significance of support structures and clearer communication channels. For instance, they stressed the importance of building a relationship with patrons, which can help interactions progress from casual exchanges to in-depth discussions about responsible gambling. However, challenges persist, necessitating a closer examination of resource allocation and tailored training programs to fortify the GSAs' capacity.

As the MGC navigates the evolving gambling terrain, the introduction of sports betting is an emergent issue for GSAs and GSMs. They anticipate an increase in gambling-related issues as a result, which demands a proactive approach. Consequently, there is a desire to be well equipped to address this evolving gambling landscape in Massachusetts. Based on the desires of the GSAs and GSMs, we recommend refining communication strategies and boosting GSIC visibility to leverage interactive activities and social media for outreach. The call for continuous education initiatives echoed loudly, underscoring the commitment required to align expectations and empower both patrons and GSAs for responsible gambling practices.

GSAs and GSMs believe GameSense is a dynamic and indispensable program, and that the program is at a juncture where strategic interventions can propel GameSense into a transformative phase. There is a firm commitment to the program and a belief that by proactively embracing the recommendations, GameSense has the potential to not only meet but exceed expectations, cultivating a safer and more informed gambling landscape for the players in Massachusetts.

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GameSense: GSA/GSM Survey

Research personnel: The following people are involved in this study, and may be contacted at any time if you have questions or concerns:

Dr. Michael Wohl (Principal Investigator; michael.wohl@carleton.ca; 613-520-2600, ext. 2908);
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Amy Ortis (Other research personnel; AmyOrtis@cunet.carleton.ca);

Concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact the Carleton University Ethics Board (ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: We are asking for some input from GameSense Advisors (GSAs) and GameSense Managers (GSMs) about GameSense. We are interested in your thoughts about the GameSense brand, the GameSense Information Centers (GSICs), and your interactions with patrons. We will also present you with the results of surveys we have conducted with patrons and ask for your thoughts on those results. We welcome your input.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study.

Benefits/Compensation: We are offering a $20 Amazon.com Gift Card for completing this online survey, which should take you approximately 10 min. Your gift card will be emailed to you should you provide us with a valid email address.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The information you provide will be kept confidential. This information will be aggregated with the information collected from other GSAs and GSMs and used only for research and knowledge translation purposes. All information collected will be stored securely on Qualtrics servers located in the United States. Data will be stored on the lead researcher's secure MS Teams channel dedicated to this project.

Because there will be no personal information associated with the data, the dataset will be stored electronically and kept indefinitely. Additionally, we will upload this anonymized dataset to an online data repository called Open Science Framework (http://osf.io/) for research and teaching purposes. Aggregate data may also be used in publications, presentations, and future research. The (fully anonymized) data from this study may be released to journals upon request. Lastly, anonymized data may be shared with trusted colleagues.

Right to withdraw: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer certain questions or to withdraw your data upon completion of the survey. To withdraw your data, please email the researchers. Upon withdrawal, all your information will be permanently deleted. If you would like to withdraw during the study, you may click the "withdraw" button at the bottom of each page. By clicking "withdraw" you will automatically be re-directed to the debriefing page including the links to access support services. If you would like to withdraw but still be compensated for the survey, please continue to the end of the survey (without answering any questions) and provide us with your email address.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board B (Reference **#119970**) and is being funded by Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

Consent By checking this box, you agree to the following terms:

○ I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. I understand that I will be compensated with a $20 Amazon.com Gift Card for my participation in this study (please note that you will need to provide an email address to be compensated). My participation in this study is voluntary. (1)

○ I do not consent to the study. (2)

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Instruction Block 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate!

We greatly value your expertise and experience as frontline ambassadors of the GameSense program.

You interact with players daily and possess a wealth of knowledge that can help us make recommendations about the program.

Your input will play a vital role in shaping the future of responsible gambling initiatives and ensuring that GameSense continues to make a positive impact.

On the next page, we will ask you some questions about your experience with GameSense. Specifically, we will ask you about your experiences with regular players as well as casino employees.

INSTRUCTIONS: This block of items asks you about your experience with *regular players*.

A regular player = an individual who has gambled at your home casino at least 3 times in the last 3 month.

Respond to these items based on what you think is currently true, and *not* what you hope will be true in the future

[All responses will be on a slider scale from 0% to 100%]

Aware In your experience, what percent of *regular players* are aware of GameSense?

Target In your experience, what percent of *regular players* correctly believe GameSense is for all players (i.e., from recreational gamblers to those who are living with a gambling disorder)?

Visit_RG In your experience, what percent of visits to a GameSense Information Center (GSIC) are because *regular players* want to know more about responsible gambling (e.g., know how a game works, learn about RG, learn about gambling-related myths)?

Visit_Non-RG In your experience, what percent of visits to a GSIC by *regular players* are for non-responsible gambling reasons (e.g., they wanted to get swag)?

Visit_lounge In your experience, what percent of visits to a GSIC by *regular players* are for the purpose of using the GSIC as place to take a break from the gaming (e.g., as a lounge, as a place to connect with GSAs they consider friends)?

Visit_DG In your experience, what percent of visits to a GSIC are because *regular players* want to know more about supports for problem gambling (e.g. voluntary self-exclusion)? [use a slider scale from 0% to 100%]

INSTRUCTIONS: This block of items asks you about your experience with *all players* who gamble at your home casino (i.e., all individuals who come to the casino to gamble).

Demonstration In your experience, what percentage of your interactions with players could be considered a demonstration interaction (i.e., a longer, communication from a GSA or GSM about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works)?

[use a slider scale from 0% to 100%]

Exchange In your experience, what percentage of your interactions with players could be considered an exchange interaction (i.e., a two-way communication with a GameSense Advisor about responsible gaming or problem gaming)?

[use a slider scale from 0% to 100%]

Translate What percentage of non-RG related interactions with players are you able to translate into an exchange or demonstration interaction (i.e., a player approaches you with a non-RG question and you are able to shift that interaction to one about RG)?

[use a slider scale from 0% to 100%]

End of Block: GSA Experience Block

Start of Block: Results Block

Below are some high-level findings from the survey of players and front-line casino employees.

Our evaluation of GameSense revealed valuable insights. We highlight some insights below:

1. A significant portion of players were aware of GameSense, with the majority recognizing its role in educating individuals who gamble about responsible gambling.

2. Only half of regular players as well as front-line casino employees believed that GameSense is relevant to all individuals who gamble. The remainder tend to believe it is mostly for individuals with gambling problems.

3. A small percentage of regular players and half of the front-line casino employees reported visiting a GSIC, with common reasons for visits including stumbling upon the center and going out of curiosity.

4. Common reasons players and front-line casino employees mentioned for not visiting a GSIC include the belief that they already know all that they need to know about responsible gambling and how games work.

5. In terms of interactions with GSAs and GSMs, a small percentage of regular players and front-line employees reported that they engaged with a GSA and/or GSM. Most of these interactions were simple in nature.

6. Those who had a meaningful interaction with a GSA or GSM (i.e., had demonstration or exchange interaction) felt more informed about responsible gambling compared to those who had only a simple interaction.

Overall, when people engage with GSAs and GSMs, they have a positive experience and come away more informed.

INSTRUCTIONS: On the next couple of pages, we will ask you to provide feedback on the results we just presented to you.

Gut Overall, what is your initial reaction to the results we just provided to you?

_____

Surprise Overall, what result surprised you the most (if any)?

_____

Challenge Were there any specific findings that stood out to you as a clear challenge or opportunity for you as a GSA or GSM or for GameSense as a whole?

_____

Improve What is one thing you think can be done to close the gap between awareness of GameSense and engagement with it (i.e., visiting a GSIC or interacting with a GSA or GSM)?

_____

Page Break

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of ways to potentially increase the number of players who engage with GameSense (i.e., visit a GSIC and/or having a Responsible Gambling-based interaction with a GSA or GSM).

[Response options "Yes, I think this will work" "No, I don't think this will work" "We already do this, and I think it works" "We already do this, and I think it doesn't work"]

2. **Offer Informative Workshops:** Conduct workshops or sessions to casino patrons that highlight the benefits of visiting a GSIC and provide insights into responsible gambling practices.

3. **Promote Interactive Activities:** Organize interactive activities or games within GSICs to attract patrons and encourage them to engage with responsible gambling resources.

4. **Enhance the visibility of GSICs:** Give them a more prominent location in the casino environment.

5. **Collaborate with Promotions:** Coordinate with marketing and promotions teams to integrate GSIC information into ongoing casino promotions.

6. **Host Guest Speakers:** Arrange talks or presentations by experts on responsible gambling topics to draw patrons' attention to GSICs.

7. **Utilize Social Media:** Use social media platforms to share success stories, testimonials, and engaging content related to GSIC visits.

8. **Offer Incentives:** Provide casino incentives such as discounts, giveaways, or reward program points for players who have an RG-based interaction with a GSA or GSM.

9. **Integrate GSIC Info on Apps:** Make information about GSIC locations, services, and benefits more visible on the casino's mobile app.

10. **Leverage Patron Feedback:** Actively seek input from patrons to tailor GSIC offerings to their preferences and needs.

11. **Cross-Promote with Amenities:** Collaborate with dining, shopping, or other amenities within the casino to cross-promote GSICs.

12. **Implement Ambassador Programs:** Train select casino staff to serve as GSIC ambassadors, guiding patrons toward GSIC visits.

13. **Provide Virtual Tours:** Offer virtual tours or online previews of GSICs to encourage patrons to explore in-person.

14. **Add a "Take a Break" sitting area:** Increase the size of the GSIC to have a dedicated "Take a Break" sitting area that would be advertised as a place where players can take a break from gambling.

15. **Other (please specify):** ____

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of ways to potentially increase the proportion of front-line casino employees who interact with GameSense Advisors (GSAs) about responsible gambling.

Front-line casino employee = An individual who may interact with casino patrons in various capacities within the casino environment.

[Response options "Yes" "No" "We already do this, and I think it works" "We already do this, and I think it doesn't work"]

1. **Mandatory Training:** Make interactions with GSAs or GSMs a mandatory part of casino employee training, emphasizing the importance of responsible gambling education.

2. **Regular Workshops:** Conduct regular workshops or training sessions for casino employees on the benefits of interacting with GSAs and promoting responsible gambling.

3. **Recognition Programs:** Establish casino employee recognition programs that acknowledge and reward those who actively engage with GSAs and promote responsible gambling.

4. **Team Challenges:** Organize team-based challenges or competitions that encourage casino employees to seek information from GSAs and apply it in their interactions.

5. **Referral Rewards:** Offer rewards or incentives to casino employees who successfully refer players to GSAs for responsible gambling assistance.

6. **Educational Campaigns:** Launch casino educational campaigns that highlight the role of GSAs and GSMs and the value of their interactions in enhancing the casino environment.

7. **Managerial Support:** Encourage casino managers to lead by example and engage with GSAs themselves, setting a precedent for their teams.

8. **Cross-Training:** Integrate responsible gambling topics into existing training programs to create a holistic approach to employee education.

9. **Feedback Loop:** Establish a feedback mechanism where casino employees can share their experiences with GSAs and suggest areas for improvement.

10. **Specialized Training:** Provide specialized training to front-line casino employees on how to effectively approach players about responsible gambling and refer them to GSAs and GSMs.

11. **GSA Open House:** Organize regular open house sessions where GSAs interact with employees, share insights, and build relationships.

12. **Peer Mentoring:** Implement a peer mentoring program where experienced casino employees guide newcomers on responsible gambling interactions.

13. **Collaborative Initiatives:** Encourage collaboration between GSAs and GSMs and various casino departments to reinforce the importance of responsible gambling.

14. **Employee Wellness Focus:** Position responsible gambling interactions as part of overall casino employee wellness, emphasizing the positive impact on their work environment.

15. **Other (please specify):** _____

As part of MGC's and MACGH's ongoing commitment to providing the best possible support to players, we will now ask you for your insights and perspectives on the changing gambling landscape (i.e., the introduction of mobile and retail sports betting).

Your valuable input will help tailor GameSense strategies and resources to effectively address these changes and continue promoting responsible gambling practices.

Concern I am concerned that the introduction of mobile and retail sports gambling in Massachusetts has lead to increased gambling-related issues among players.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree

Adapt The evolving gaming landscape, including mobile sports gambling, presents challenges that may require GSAs and GSMs to adapt current educational strategies.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree

GS1 I believe that the introduction of sports betting has required GSAs and GSMs to provide additional educational resources and support for players.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree

GS2 I am confident that GSAs and GSMs are adequately informed and educated to handle the evolving gambling landscape in Massachusetts.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree

GS2 Do you have any other concerns about GameSense as it relates to the changes in the gambling landscape in Massachusetts?

Age What is your age?

1. 18 - 24
2. 25 - 34
3. 35 - 44
4. 45 - 54
5. 55 - 64
6. 65 and above

Job How long have you been a GSA or GSM (GSMs should include the time they were a GSA too, if applicable)?

1. Less than 6 months
2. 6 months - 1 year
3. 1 - 2 years
4. 3- 4 years
5. 5 years or more

Thank you for completing the GSA/GSM Survey!

The information you have provided in this survey will help us provide better tools to promote positive play. Your feedback will help us improve GameSense-branded services.

 Email *To receive your $20 Amazon.com Gift Card, please provide an email address below (gift cards will be distributed within 48 hours. We appreciate your patience):*

_____

Thank you for participating in this research!

What is the purpose of this evaluation?
The purpose of this research is to gather your valuable insights and perspectives as GameSense Advisors and GameSense Managers on the evolving gambling landscape, specifically in the context of Massachusetts. We aim to understand your concerns, thoughts, and potential challenges related to the introduction of mobile and retail sports betting. By seeking your input, we strive to adapt our GameSense initiatives to effectively address emerging trends and ensure that our responsible gambling education remains relevant and impactful. Your feedback will play a vital role in shaping the strategies and resources we develop to enhance the well-being of players and promote responsible gaming practices. Thank you for your essential contributions to this important endeavor.

If I have any further questions, please feel free to contact us:
If you have any questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Michael Wohl @ michael.wohl@carleton.ca

Should you wish to contact us at a later date, please make note of Michael's email address or ask Ray Fluette for his email address.

Ethical concerns:
This study has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B Reference **#119970**). If you have any ethical concerns about this study, please contact the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (ethics@carleton.ca).

End of Block: Debriefing

<center>**Appendix** B: **Semi-Structured Interview Questions**</center>

General Questions:

1. Can you describe what you believe has been the most significant success in your role as a GameSense Advisor? [follow-up] what do you find most rewarding about your role as a GSA?

2. On the flip side, what's the most significant challenge you've encountered while assisting players with responsible gambling? [follow-up] What do you find the least rewarding or most difficult about your role as a GSA?

3. **Time permitting:** From your perspective, how have players generally responded to the GameSense program? What have players found the most useful or helpful? What do you think is important about having GSAs available at the casinos?

Specific to Research Findings:

4. It seems from our surveys with players that most know about GS, but very few engage in deeper interactions (demonstration and/or exchange) with advisors or use the tools available. Why do you think so few players take advantage of the products and services that GS provides? How do you think we can increase the number of meaningful interactions (demonstration and/or exchange) players have with GSAs?

5. Many players and employee think that the main reason for GameSense is to help problem gamblers. Is that your experience? Why do you think this misunderstanding exists? What are the consequences? What can be done about this?

6. **Time permitting:** The surveys found that, in addition to responsible-gaming-related reasons, many players engage with GameSense Advisors to obtain promotional items and

swag. How does this align with your experiences, and how effective is this (if effective) to motivate players to learn more about what GS has to offer?

7. The surveys indicated a challenge in attracting younger patrons to responsible gambling programs. What do you think contributes to this? What strategies do you think would be effective in engaging younger players and promoting responsible gambling?

Specific to Recommendations:

11. **Time permitting:** We recommended the development clear communication strategies to highlight GameSense's independence from the casinos and clarify GSAs' employment status. Do you find that players (and employees) think you are employee by the casino? If so, what effect do you think it has, and what can be done about it?

12. We understand that all casino employees receive training on GS when they are hired. What (if anything) do you know about new employee training about GS? Are there ways that this training could be enhanced to help you do your job (during the conversation prompt the notion of re-training or GSA facilitated events; not that employees to talk to GSAs were more likely to refer)?

13. A recommendation from the research was to promote GSIC as a lounge and then leverage that to initiate conversations. What are your thoughts about such a recommendation? Do you have specific strategies or ideas you believe would be particularly effective in engaging players with varying motivations?

Specific to Attracting Players:

16. In your experience, what approaches or strategies do you believe can be effective in attracting more players to practice responsible gambling? [this is kinda like #8]

Specific to Support in the Casino Environment:

17. How supported do you feel within the casino environment in your role as a GameSense Advisor? How integrated do you feel into the casino environment (might better integration result in better uptake of GS)? Are their activities you want to engage in that are stifled by being a third party in the casino?

Specific to Support from Massachusetts Council on Gambling and Health:

18. **Time permitting:** Could you share your experiences regarding the support you've received from the Massachusetts Council on Gambling and Health? How could their support be improved to enhance your role as a GameSense Advisor?

Blue Sky Questions:

20. What innovative methods or tools would you like to see implemented to promote responsible gambling and attract players to GameSense?

21. How can GameSense be better integrated into the community and/or other forms of gaming (e.g., sports wagering)?

22. We would like to turn your attention to resourcing of GS. Do you feel sufficiently compensated for your time? What additional resources do you think would be valuable for the GameSense program to achieve its goals?