



NYS Gaming Commission: 518-388-3415



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## **NYS GAMING COMMISSION, OASAS & NY COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING FORM RESPONSIBLE PLAY PARTNERSHIP TO ADDRESS PROBLEM GAMBLING ISSUES**

*Combines Gaming Commission's rapid enforcement and compliance measures with OASAS' and NY Council on Problem Gambling's outreach efforts; All will share resources and collaborate to ensure consistency and swift action to address problem gambling issues*

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. (February 20, 2013) – The New York State Gaming Commission, the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the New York Council on Problem Gambling today announced the formation of the Responsible Play Partnership to address problem gambling in New York State.

The Responsible Play Partnership will take on a variety of issues surrounding problem gambling, including ensuring that gaming venues comply with all rules and regulations and undertake proper outreach measures, reevaluating self-exclusion policies across the state to ensure consistency, and considering the best ways to advance New York's long-term commitment to prevent and treat compulsive gambling.

Robert Williams, Acting Executive Director of the State Gaming Commission said, "This type of relationship is a critical component of the effective regulation of gaming and wagering within the state. We are committed to this endeavor and are proud to launch it as a primary initiative from the Gaming Commission's onset. The Responsible Play Partnership will be an open, ongoing dialogue across all of New York's gaming and wagering interests, and we look forward to getting started."

Arlene González-Sánchez, Commissioner of OASAS said, "Problem gambling is a very real concern in New York State, and this partnership will provide the real-world tools and resources needed to adequately address the issue. We look forward to working collaboratively with our partners both within and beyond state government to promote problem gambling prevention and ensure treatment services are available for those New Yorkers who struggle with compulsive gambling."

James Maney, Executive Director of the New York Council on Problem Gambling, said, "The continuing and significant evolution of gambling in New York makes the Responsible Play Partnership the right thing to do at the right time. We applaud Governor Cuomo, the Gaming

Commission and OASAS for working with us to create a responsible gambling environment for New York State.”

The Gaming Commission and OASAS have been collaborating on how to best meet the demands posed by problem gambling. The Responsible Play Partnership, which will expand to other partners focused on problem gambling issues across the state, is the first step to ensure consistency in further recognizing and addressing the issue. The New York Council on Problem Gambling is one of many recipients of grant funding from OASAS to address problem gambling.

The Responsible Play Partnership will include the following components:

**Swift enforcement of age restriction laws:** New York law prohibits gambling under the age of 18 at all OTBs, horse racing facilities and casinos. The current legal purchase age for Lottery tickets is 18 and 21 in establishments that sell alcoholic beverages. Similar to state enforcement efforts that prevent alcoholic beverage sales to underage buyers, the Responsible Play Partnership will help to enforce the age restriction laws for gambling:

- The Council on Problem Gambling is coordinating with various alcohol and substance abuse councils across the State to carry out underage compliance checks at various locales, with Gaming Commission staff accompanying them.
- Underage volunteers will attempt to place bets, purchase tickets and/or engage in gambling activities at lottery retailers, Quick Draw locales, off-track betting and E-Z Bet locations, race tracks and video lottery terminal facilities across the state.
- When violations occur and where possible, Gaming Commission personnel on-hand will issue an immediate notice to the venue outlining the violation and any applicable disciplinary action.
- Violations could result in fines, suspensions or revocation of an entity’s license to participate or provide such services in New York.

**Proper resources at facilities to identify and address problem gambling:** The Gaming Commission will mandate that VLT locations, off-track betting facilities and race tracks in the state submit a report indicating how they currently handle individuals showing signs of being problem gamblers. The Commission will evaluate these measures with OASAS, the Council on Problem Gambling and future partners to issue improved consistent policies to all facility operators.

**Comprehensive, statewide self-exclusion policy:** Current procedures for the exclusion of self-identified problem gamblers who request that they be prohibited from entering facilities or prohibited from participating in gaming activities are inconsistent, inadequate and/or non-existent throughout the state’s various gaming venues. The Gaming Commission will work with OASAS and the Council to identify ways to make self-exclusion policies more consistent and effective.

**Enhanced outreach and awareness:** The New York State Lottery has prominently promoted OASAS’ HOPEline (1-877-8-HOPENY) at retail locations, on play cards and tickets, on every VLT and on signage at each gaming facility. The Gaming Commission will expand language

referring to HOPEline and make it more prominent at OTB facilities, tracks and casinos, as well as online.

**Working group to improve responsible gaming policies and programs:** The Gaming Commission, OASAS and the Council on Problem Gambling will establish a standing working group to evaluate the State's existing responsible gaming policies and programs and identify ways to enhance such measures. The working group will issue recommendations to the Gaming Commission for its implementation.

Ike Dweck, Director of The SAFE Foundation in Brooklyn said, "The SAFE Foundation applauds Governor Cuomo, the New York State Gaming Commission and OASAS for launching an initiative which will produce real results for New Yorkers who are dealing with the personal impact of problem gambling. We look forward to joining the Responsible Play Partnership and working together to ensure responsible gaming practices and making sure resources for those who need them are within reach."

Cheryl Hecht, MSW, MPH, CPGC, Problem Gambling Therapist for The Pederson-Krag Centers' Thomas R. Kenney GamPro Program in Suffolk County, said, "We support the formation of the Responsible Play Partnership, which clearly demonstrates New York's commitment to helping individuals and families affected by problem gambling. We look forward to participating with our colleagues and partners in state government to further address this important issue."

The New York State Gaming Commission regulates all aspects of gaming and gambling activity in the state, including horse racing and pari-mutuel wagering, Class III Indian Gaming, video lottery terminal facilities at race tracks, the state lottery and charitable gaming.

OASAS oversees one of the nation's largest addiction services systems dedicated to Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, with more than 1,650 programs serving over 100,000 New Yorkers on any given day.

For more information on problem gambling:

- NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services: [www.oasas.ny.gov/gambling/index.cfm](http://www.oasas.ny.gov/gambling/index.cfm)
- New York Council on Problem Gambling: [www.nyproblemgambling.org](http://www.nyproblemgambling.org)
- Gamblers Anonymous: [www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/)