



For Immediate Release: March 12, 2014

Contact: Lee.Park@gaming.ny.gov

NEW YORK STATE GAMING COMMISSION ANNOUNCES PROBLEM GAMBLING FORUM, RECAPS RESPONSIBLE PLAY EFFORTS IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH

New York State Gaming Commission Chairman Mark D. Gearan today announced the Commission will host a Problem Gambling Forum in April to underscore the importance of the subject and gain a further understanding of the issue as the state stands at the precipice of expanded gaming options in the state.

Chairman Gearan made the announcement at the Commission's March meeting, where the Commission's commitment to addressing the challenges of problem gambling and promoting responsible gaming was reviewed, including the Commission's ongoing partnership with the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the New York Council on Problem Gambling, known as the Responsible Play Partnership.

"Effective regulation of gaming includes addressing the very real challenge of problem gambling and gambling addiction," said Chairman Gearan. "It permeates all components that we regulate. The Commission is in a unique position to focus on the issue. While the Commission has already made strides with its partners in promoting responsible play, I am confident that we can and should do even more."

Initial participants in the forum are expected to include Responsible Play Partnership member representatives from OASAS and the New York Council on Problem Gambling, problem gambling experts, providers, academics and facility operators. The goal will be to discuss industry best practices.

The information from this forum will help to guide the policies and regulations of the Commission, and will also aid the newly appointed Gaming Facility Location Board and the Commission in their review of the problem gambling plan components of the Request for Applications for full casinos in New York. Pursuant to the Upstate New York Gaming and Economic Development Act, the Commission must approve the sufficiency of a casino applicant's problem gambling plan before issuing or renewing any casino license.

One of the first significant acts taken by the Commission after its inception in February 2013 was to form the Responsible Play Partnership to examine all issues surrounding problem gambling. The broad topics include:

- Ensuring that gaming venues comply with all rules and regulations
- Undertaking proper outreach measures
- Reevaluating self-exclusion policies across the state to ensure consistency
- Considering the best ways to advance New York's long-term commitment to prevent and treat compulsive gambling
- Providing real-world tools and resources needed to adequately address the issue
- Promoting problem gambling prevention and ensure treatment services are available for those New Yorkers who struggle with compulsive gambling
- Creating a responsible gambling environment for New York State

The Responsible Play Partnership also established a standing working group, consisting of representatives from OASAS and the New York Council on Problem Gambling, that meets quarterly to review New York's existing responsible gaming policies and programs and recommend changes as needed to the Commission for implementation.

Combatting Underage Gambling:

Over the past year, the Responsible Play Partnership has developed a strategic administrative approach to ensuring compliance with New York's existing age restriction laws for gambling products. 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 for Quick Draw tickets only, and 21 in establishments where alcoholic beverages are consumed.

Last year, the Responsible Play Partnership launched its “Under 18?/We Check ID/ It’s The Law” educational initiative, which includes two components:

- Comprehensive training for employees at Lottery retailers, tracks, VLT facilities and charitable gaming locales on how to identify underage individuals and the consequences for permitting underage play,
- A campaign to educate the gambling public of the age restriction laws in New York State.

The “We Check ID” program has garnered a 97 percent compliance rate across nearly 18,000 Lottery retailers statewide. Similarly strong compliance rates are being reported across other gaming venues as well.

In November 2013, the Commission proposed a series of penalties to accommodate such an enforcement measure, which are pending a public comment period per the State Administrative Procedures Act. Once the penalties are formally adopted, the Responsible Play Partnership intends to undertake administrative enforcement efforts to penalize entities that permit underage gaming. These will be similar to existing efforts that prevent alcoholic beverage sales to minors.

Self-Exclusion Programs:

In the past, 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 have been inconsistent among the state’s various gaming venues.

Last summer, the Responsible Play Partnership brought top management at all nine video lottery facilities and race tracks together to address the technical and administrative issues that need to be resolved in advance of the launch of a statewide self-exclusion program.

The initial result was an agreement for a uniform request form for all facilities to be created by the Commission. Additionally, it was agreed that at each venue, the racing facilities and VLT facilities will share their respective self-exclusion lists. The intended end result is a statewide self-exclusion list that applies to all gaming facilities across the state.

Availability of Resources for Problem Gambling:

The Responsible Play Partnership dramatically increased visibility of the 1-877-8HOPE-NY helpline administered by OASAS through the distribution and placement of a new, multi-lingual “Remember, it’s just a game” poster at all gambling establishments statewide.

National Problem Gambling Awareness Month Actions:

As March has been designated National Problem Gambling Awareness Month the Commission and the Responsible Play Partnership have launched several additional initiatives, including:

- Placing the Commission’s “It’s Just a Game. Play Responsibly” message featuring the 1-877-8HOPE-NY addictions hotline on all public promotion screens at close to 18,000 licensed Lottery retailers statewide
- Printing the “It’s Just a Game. Play Responsibly” and 1-877-8HOPE-NY addictions hotline number on millions of draw game tickets dispensed via Lottery terminals during the month of March
- Linking to the Problem Gambling PSA produced by the National Council on Problem Gambling from the Commission, Lottery, and other Responsible Play Partnership members’ Web sites

###