

Self-Exclusion Programs: A step in the right direction

**Massachusetts Gaming Commission
Forum on Responsible Gaming**

Boston, Monday, October 28, 2013

**Robert Ladouceur, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus,
School of Psychology,
Université Laval,
Québec, Canada**

Outline

- 1. Why SE programs are important**
- 2. The essential elements of regular and improved SE programs**
- 3. Empirical evidence on the benefits of an improved SE program**
- 4. Suggestions, and discussion**

Why SE is so important

- Among the pathological gamblers identified in prevalence studies, relatively few will seek professional help or get involved in a formal treatment.
- The best available figure is that about **10%** will do, and this figure is spread over a three yr period.
- Thus, indicating that about **3%** only will seek Tx per year.

Implications of this Observation

- A variety of interventions need to be implemented.
- **SE programs are among these interventions**

Responsible Gambling

**Brief summary of our previous
Self-Exclusion evaluation program**

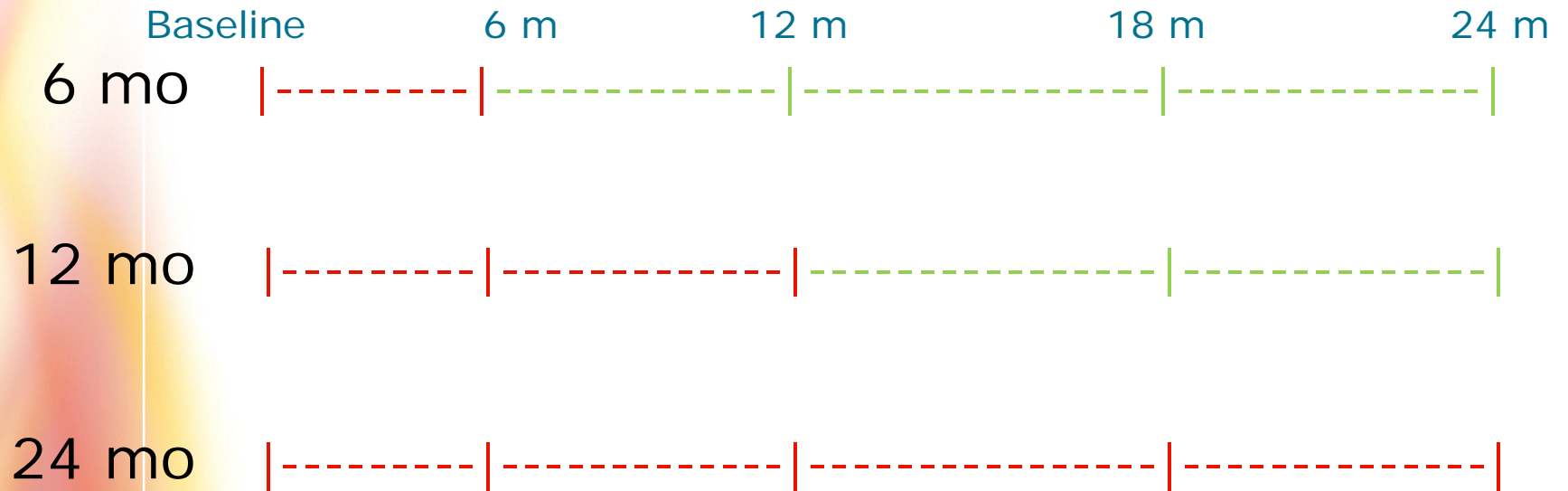
Quebec Casinos

- Self-exclusion is available in the 4 casinos in Quebec, Canada
- Self-exclusion period ranges -> 6 mo to 5 yrs

Main Goals

1. Assess changes in gambling behavior and gambling problems of self-excluded patrons.
2. Follow self-excluded gamblers for two years (during and after the self-exclusion period).

Design



Sample and Methodology

A total of 161 individuals who excluded themselves from a Quebec casino

This was the first self-exclusion contract for all participants.

Each participant was contacted by telephone every six months for two years, for a total of five interviews.

Main Findings

- The urge to gamble was significantly reduced.
- The perception of control over the gambling was significantly increased.
- The intensity of negative consequences from gambling was significantly decreased in the areas of daily activities, social life, work, and mood.
- **The number of Pathological gamblers was significantly reduced during and after the SE period, 25 to 30%.**

Main Findings Over Time

- At the 6, 12, and 24 month about 40% to 50% had breached their contract at least once.
- **One comment expressed by many SE patrons is that they felt **alone** during the SE period.**

So, how can we address these issues ?

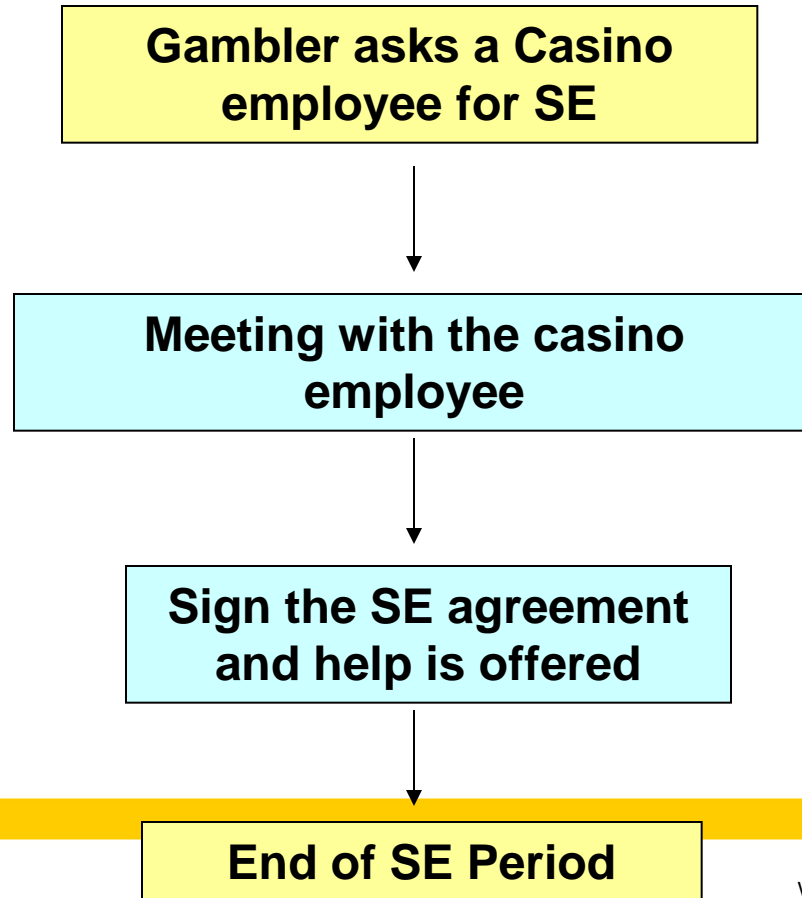
Improved Self-Exclusion Program

Professor Alex Blaszczyński

Lia Nower, Ph.D.

(and Vicki Flannery for her input)

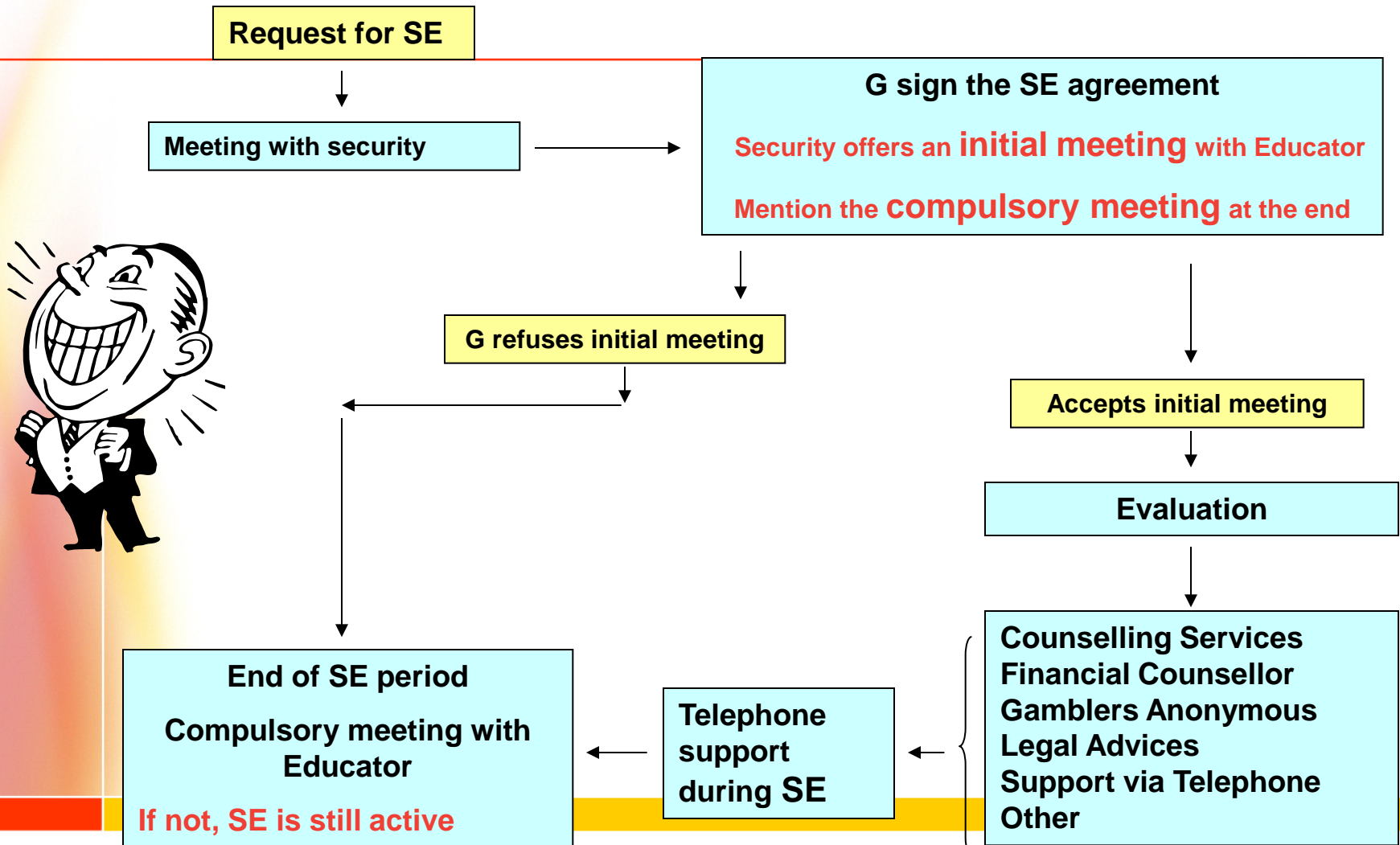
The Usual Procedure Used for SE



Few observations

- If the SE patron is identified in the venue, the operator will invited him /her to leave the casino.
- The GREAT majority of the SE patrons are PG.
- Very few gamblers will enroll in SE a preventive context: I know only one....
- SE program was also introduced in Quebec for VLT parlors.

Improved SE Procedure



Improved SE Program

Key features of this new procedure provides

- A voluntary initial meeting with the Educator.
- If desired, support (telephone) is provided by the Educator during the SE period.
- A mandatory final meeting will with the Educator.
- ***To move away from a detection-based enforcement model, to an active approach of personal involvement and responsibility.***

Participation

- 67.5% made the choice to sign the improved SE
- N = 292 accepted to participate in the study
- 38.9% accepted the initial meeting
But only 30% attended the meeting
- 70.5% attended the final mandatory meeting

Key Findings

Over time and up to one year after the end of the SE period, results show a significant decrease in

- **the number of pathological gamblers**
- time and money spent gambling
- the intensity of negative consequences in areas such as social and family life
- the presence of symptoms of depression and anxiety

Key Findings

- The majority of the participants who attended the voluntary initial meeting found it either “quite useful” or “very useful”.
- 97% of those who participated in the mandatory meeting said it was “quite useful” or “very useful” in helping them assess their gambling habits.
- The most appreciated components was the **competency and personal qualities of the Educator**, the help and support participants received.

Key Findings

Some participants are reluctant to a mandatory meeting at the end of the SE period.

- 18% emitted negative comments
- About 1/3 believe that the final meeting should not be compulsory

Conclusions and Suggestions

- SE individuals are a very diversified and complex sample.
- Very difficult to conduct research with SE patrons
- They are reluctant to participate in a study

Based on these results and observations, we suggest....

Main Suggestion

- **To offer a “Buffet” approach**
- This means that the SE patron could choose from and comply with the following options:
 - *No additional measures*
 - *Initial meeting*
 - *Meeting at the end of the SE Period*
 - *Telephone contacts with the Educator*
 - *Few periodic booster sessions*
 - *Etc.*

Breaching and Winning

What should the operator do if the SE breaches and wins a big price?

- The operator should not pay the winnings

Is it sufficient to implement a SE program?

- No, it should be regularly evaluated, and adjusted according to the results

Self-Exclusion Programs: A step in the right direction

Thank you for your attention

robert.ladouceur@psy.ulaval.ca

Robert Ladouceur, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus,
School of Psychology,
Université Laval,
Québec, Canada