

CASINO CONTROL COMMISSION

Tennessee Avenue and Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

CCC fines casinos on self-exclusion; underage players forfeit winnings to state

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ATLANTIC CITY - The Casino Control Commission today fined two casinos a total of \$20,000 for allowing a self-excluded person to gamble and collected more than \$3,200 forfeited by 117 underage gamblers.

“There are people who can not and should not be gambling in Atlantic City and casinos must be vigilant in their efforts to keep those individuals out,” commission chair Linda M Kassekert said. “Neither regulators nor casino operators want to see problem gamblers or underage gamblers at the tables or slot machines in Atlantic City,” she added.

Bally’s Atlantic City and Caesars Atlantic City were fined \$10,000 each for failing to exclude a person on the state’s self-exclusion list. The individual, who was placed on the list in July 2003, was able to gamble repeatedly in both casinos in 2005 and 2006. During that time, the individual lost \$48,563 at Bally’s and another \$38,759 at Caesars. He also received more than \$8,000 in complimentaries.

In stipulations settling the complaints, the casinos and the Division of Gaming Enforcement agreed that efforts to identify the individual “were thwarted by the individual’s intentional deception.” Kassekert noted that the individual opened 15 different patron accounts at the casinos. The casinos correctly marked 13 of those accounts to indicate the individual was self-excluded but they did not know the same individual opened the other two accounts because he used a different name, address and social security number in opening them.

“It is not unusual for compulsive gamblers who have asked to be excluded from casinos to later offer false identification documents to be able to wager again,” said Donald Weinbaum, executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey. “While self-exclusion isn’t failsafe, it is an important tool to help those individuals who otherwise cannot control their gambling behavior. Self-exclusion is most effective when

combined with a recovery program, so we urge anyone who thinks they could have a problem to reach out for help and information. Gamblers and their families can call our 1-800-GAMBLER helpline 24 hours a day for free and confidential assistance or check out our website at www.800gambler.org .”

Officials from Bally’s and Caesars assured the commission that they take their responsibilities and obligations regarding self-exclusion seriously and they consistently explore avenues in which to advance their responsible gaming initiatives.

New Jersey’s Self-Exclusion Program started in 2001 and more than 1,200 people have asked to be excluded for some period of time. A person can sign up for a minimum of one year, five years or for lifetime. To date, more than 230 people who signed up for a minimum of one or five years have asked to be removed from the list. Kassekert noted that people who sign up for less than lifetime exclusion are not automatically dropped but after the one- or five-year period expires must complete an application for removal. There currently are 988 people in the Self-Exclusion Program, including 38 who enrolled in the program, removed themselves and signed up a second time.

The Casino Control Commission and the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey work together to promote awareness of the Self-Exclusion Program and to inform people of the treatment programs available for compulsive gamblers. When people sign up for self-exclusion, casinos must stop marketing to them, must remove them from any mailing lists, stop offering comps or credit or any other inducement to gamble. If a person on the list decides to gamble anyway, money that the person wins can be forfeited to the state. Similarly, if a casino willfully continues to market to a self-excluded person and wins money from him or her, the casino’s winnings can be forfeited to the state and the casino can face other penalties.

In another action, the commission approved the forfeiture of \$3,258.25 that was taken from 117 underage gamblers at three different casinos – Tropicana, Borgata and Caesars. In each case, the casino identified the underage players and confiscated any chips or cash in the slot machines they were playing. The forfeited amounts range from 17 cents to \$280. Money that is forfeited to the state, and much of the money collected through fines, is divided between the Casino Revenue Fund, which is dedicated to programs for the state’s seniors and people with disabilities, and to compulsive gambling treatment and education programs.

“Underage gambling is a serious concern for the Council,” Weinbaum said. “We have an active outreach and education program in schools across the state to help young people and increase awareness about the dangers of gambling if they are not 21.”

Anyone under 21 caught gambling in an Atlantic City casino is subject to arrest and charged with a disorderly persons offense. The person can be fined \$500 to \$1,000 for underage gambling and can lose his or her driver’s license for six months.