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Illinois Lottery launches Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program to help problem gamblers

Program prevents problem gamblers from collecting large lottery prizes, receiving lottery mailings

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Lottery today launched their Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program that allows people who have determined they have a problem with gambling to stop themselves from playing the lottery by halting their prize claiming abilities. The Self-Exclusion Program aims to reduce the temptations for problem gamblers by preventing self-excluders from collecting prizes at the lottery's prize payment centers or through the lottery's central office. The Illinois Lottery will also remove self-excluders from marketing lists.

“The Illinois Lottery understands that while its games are meant to be a source of fun and enjoyment, we need to be conscious of those who may have a problem with compulsive play. By instituting the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program we are helping problem gamblers help themselves by limiting their incentives to buy lottery tickets,” said Jodie Winnett, Acting Superintendent of the Illinois Lottery.

Problem gamblers can start a life-long contract with the lottery by completing and notarizing the self-exclusion contract which can be found online at www.illinoislottery.com, at any of the lottery offices throughout the state, or through addiction counseling centers. The lottery will maintain a computer database containing the Social Security numbers of those who have signed contracts. Whenever a lottery winner tries to claim a prize more than \$600 at one of the lottery payment centers, the database will be consulted and those players on the self-exclusion list will be denied payment. In addition the Illinois Lottery will do everything reasonable to remove those on the self-exclusion list from their direct mail and email lists.

Currently the Illinois Lottery publicizes a hotline for problem gamblers on their website, on any collateral materials, and during statewide televised numbers drawings. Anyone who is concerned about a gambling problem can reach crisis counseling and referral services by calling 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537) or by contacting one of the organizations listed in the resource directory at www.illinoislottery.com/Selfxclude/Resources.htm.

In FY07, records from the 1-800-GAMBLER hotline show that just over 600 people identified the Illinois Lottery as a primary or secondary preference in their gambling problem. Although this group represents a very small percentage of the more than 5 million people that played the Lottery last year, the Illinois Lottery recognizes its responsibility to help those with a problem.



Through the hotline, the Lottery website, and problem gambling assistance organizations, the Illinois Lottery hopes to make the Self-Exclusion Program available to those who need assistance.

The Illinois Gaming Board launched a Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program in July of 2002, which has been remarkably successful with over 5,000 people participating today.