

Fact Sheet

VLT RESPONSIBLE GAMING FEATURES Phase I Evaluation Research Final Report

What is the Responsible Gaming Features Evaluation Research and why is it being done?

This research is evaluating the effectiveness of the responsible gaming features (RGFs) in reducing problem gambling behaviour in VLT players. The research will also assess the influence of other on-site responsible gaming awareness elements such as posters, signs and trained staff.

The evaluation is being conducted in two phases over a five year period (May 2003 to December 2007). Phase I involved field-based study to assess the effectiveness of and players' satisfaction with specific RGFs.

Phase I is now complete. In Phase II, the long-term performance of the VLT-based features will be monitored over the subsequent two years. The study findings will be used to advise the AGLC on modifications to features aimed at reducing VLT-related problem gambling.

The study examines the effectiveness of specific VLT machine based features and other awareness tools in a live gaming environment. This is the first known gambling study in the world using this type of methodology.

What are the VLT Responsible Gaming Features (RGFs)?

As part of the 2003-2004 program to replace Alberta's aging VLTs, the new VLT machines were equipped to display four on-screen Responsible Gaming Features. These are: a permanent time-of-day clock, player money shown in dollars and cents as well as in credits, pop-up reminders indicating time played, and problem gambling information banners. These features are tools to help players manage their time and money.

Why did the AGLC add these Responsible Gaming Features to the new VLTs?

The RGFs on VLTs are only one component of an overall plan to prevent and reduce the impacts of problem gambling. The AGLC is committed to striving towards a balance between choice and responsibility in all forms of gaming. The VLT replacement program provided us an opportunity both to introduce these responsible gaming features and to begin to evaluate their effectiveness.

We see our overall Responsible Gaming Program as a continuation of the direction taken by the Gaming Licensing Policy Review since 2001. We believe strongly in the importance of providing VLT gaming entertainment in a socially responsible manner.

What were the key findings in the Phase I report, entitled *Evaluating VLT Features and Interventions in Alberta –Phase I Final Report?*

- There was high awareness of the four new RGFs.
- The majority of VLT players found the clock and money counter to be somewhat effective in helping them keep track of time and money spent.
- The majority were satisfied with the problem gambling banner ad which provides the AADAC help line number.
- Most players didn't find the RGFs interfered with their enjoyment of the game (except the pop up reminder).
- A majority of players in both groups expressed favourable comments about the other responsible gaming interventions and thought signs, posters and stickers were somewhat effective in informing them about problem gambling and the 1-800 AADAC number.

How was the first phase of the research carried out?

During May and June of 2003, researchers visited 97 VLT retailers to interview VLT players. A total of 302 players were interviewed. Half of the players were at locations with old VLTs (no RGFs) and the other half were at locations with new VLTs with the RGFs. A second round of interviews was conducted in October, which concluded the data gathering portion of the first phase of the research.

What's next in the research?

The AGLC is going to continue the research in developing effective responsible gaming features, because we believe strongly in the importance of providing VLT gaming entertainment in a responsible way. Phase I has provided a snapshot of how these features are received by the player and Phase II will look at their effectiveness over time.

When does phase two begin?

Phase II will begin in the spring and will include more in depth interviews with the same VLT players over a long period of time.

What is the name of the research firm?

Wynne Resources of Edmonton was selected to design and implement this research because of 1) the firm's vast problem gambling /gaming research experience; 2) their ability to work within the particular timeframe of the VLT Replacement Program; 3) their Alberta-based experience.

Are responsible gaming interventions like these going to put an end to problem gambling? Overall what is the AGLC doing to help people gamble responsibly?

No. It is unrealistic to expect RGFs to be a perfect solution that will eliminate problem gambling. Features to promote responsible gaming on VLTs are just one component of our overall program to address problem gambling.

Our Social Responsibility division is working jointly with AADAC on many responsible gaming programs and initiatives, including:

- the Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program in Casinos and Racing Entertainment Centres
- Responsible Gaming Program for VLT retailers
- Deal Us In Program