

# Illinois casinos to check IDs for addicts

Illinois will become the first state to require casinos to check potential patrons' identification cards in an effort to keep compulsive gamblers from feeding their addictions, gaming regulators announced Thursday.

Starting Aug. 15, employees at the nine casinos throughout Illinois will begin checking driver's licenses or state IDs of all people who want to board who look 30 years old or younger. They'll swipe the cards through electronic bar-code machines designed to verify the information written on them, and those devices will be synced with the state Gaming Board's self-ban database to automatically flag problem gamblers.

More than 3,600 people have signed up to ban themselves from Illinois casinos since the state began offering its self-exclusion program in 2002. Of those, only about 330 are under 31, but gambling regulators see the age cutoff as a means to create a „test age group“ that could help determine if older gamblers eventually should be carded, too.

Since people must be 21 or older to board casinos, a side benefit of the new rule is that it will help employees catch underage gamblers who try to get on with fraudulent licenses.

„These efforts will continue to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness,“ Gaming Board Chairman Aaron Jaffe said during a meeting of the panel Thursday. „At some point in the future, this board may require that the driver's licenses of other age groups be checked as well.“

## Carding all causes line worries

Gambling regulators began exploring the idea of carding all casino patrons, regardless of age, in January. The under-31

rule reflects a compromise between the Gaming Board and the casino industry, which expressed concern that carding all 15 million-plus people who board Illinois casinos each year would spark long lines and patron angst, especially on busy weekends.

Besides carding, casino companies are agreeing to other changes to sharpen the self-ban program's teeth. Among them is agreeing to seek criminal trespassing charges against all self-banned patrons spotted inside or trying to board casinos.

Until now, the state left it up to casino managers to decide whether to prosecute self-banned gamblers. To date, those gamblers have been caught returning to casinos 614 times, with only 138 arrests.

When people sign up for the program, they agree to donate winnings to organizations that offer help to compulsive gamblers. More than \$ 300,000 has been given to those groups to date.