



NEWS RELEASE

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Smart Choices

New Responsible Liquor Service Training Program Available Now

Smart Choices, a new training program for hospitality industry employees, launched January 2, 2017. Smart Choices replaces Serving It Safe and the Problem Gambling Assistance Program. Manitoba's liquor and gaming regulator, the Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba (LGA), and the Manitoba Tourism Education Council (MTEC) have partnered to develop and deliver the online program.

Smart Choices focuses on current laws, safety requirements, and responsible strategies when serving or selling liquor. "The focus is safety," explains LGA Executive Director and CEO Rick Josephson, adding that liquor servers and salespeople can protect themselves and their customers by understanding and following the law. Smart Choices also features new elements to increase awareness about problem gambling, drink-spiking and sexual assault, and Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines. Manitoba is among the first provinces in Canada to incorporate these elements into responsible service training.

While responsible service training has been required for restaurants, lounges and other service establishments since the 1990s, the same standard now applies to liquor retailers, including managers, security and staff at beer vendors, Liquor Marts, liquor vendors and specialty wine stores. Josephson explains, "Requiring the same training for all licensees creates a level playing field and results in standardized knowledge in the hospitality industry. This approach also gives employees the flexibility to move around the industry without the need for additional training."

Smart Choices certification will be valid for five years from the date a person completes the program. The LGA is also offering a five-year grace period to anyone who has already completed Serving It Safe or the former It's Good Business training program through MTEC.

The LGA consulted broadly with Manitobans, including hospitality industry representatives, as part of the development of Manitoba's new liquor laws in 2014. The LGA has communicated with all retail and service licensees about Smart Choices.

Additional Quotes

"We see the new comprehensive Smart Choices program as an effective way to reach out to hospitality workers across the province. Our hope is this new training program will help to get support information into the hands of even more Manitobans who are struggling with alcohol and gambling."

Ben Fry, CEO, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

"Our managers, staff and security are continuously placed in difficult situations and faced with new issues. Staying on top of current trends and keeping knowledge up-to-date protects all staff working in restaurant environments."

Coralee Dolyniuk, Executive Director, Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association

"We were pleased to work with the LGA to ensure that the transition to Smart Choices will be as seamless as possible for the hospitality industry."

Scott Jocelyn, President and CEO, Manitoba Hotel Association

For more information, please visit SmartChoicesMB.ca

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