



PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE  
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS  
PARTNERS FOR HEALTH EQUITY

FREE WEBINAR

# The Odds Are Changing: Online Casino Gambling and the Rising Risk of Harm



**Jan 9**  
12-1:15pm

FEATURING:



**Attorney Mark  
Gottlieb**  
Northeastern Law's  
Public Health  
Advocacy Institute



**Samantha Hamilton**  
Public Health Institute  
of Western MA



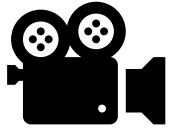
**Victor Ortiz**  
MA Dept. of Public  
Health Office of  
Problem Gambling



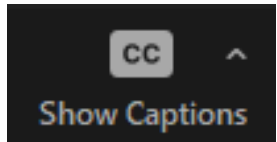
**State Representative  
Lindsay Sabadosa**  
1<sup>st</sup> Hampshire District



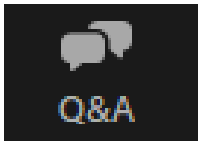
# Housekeeping



**We are recording this webinar.**



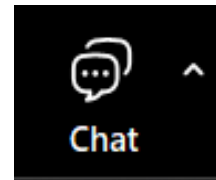
**Click “Show Captions” to enable automatically generated closed captioning.**



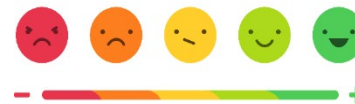
**There will be Q&A after we hear from the speakers. To submit a question, use the Q&A feature found in your zoom menu.**



**The recording and materials will be emailed to registrants and posted on our website.**

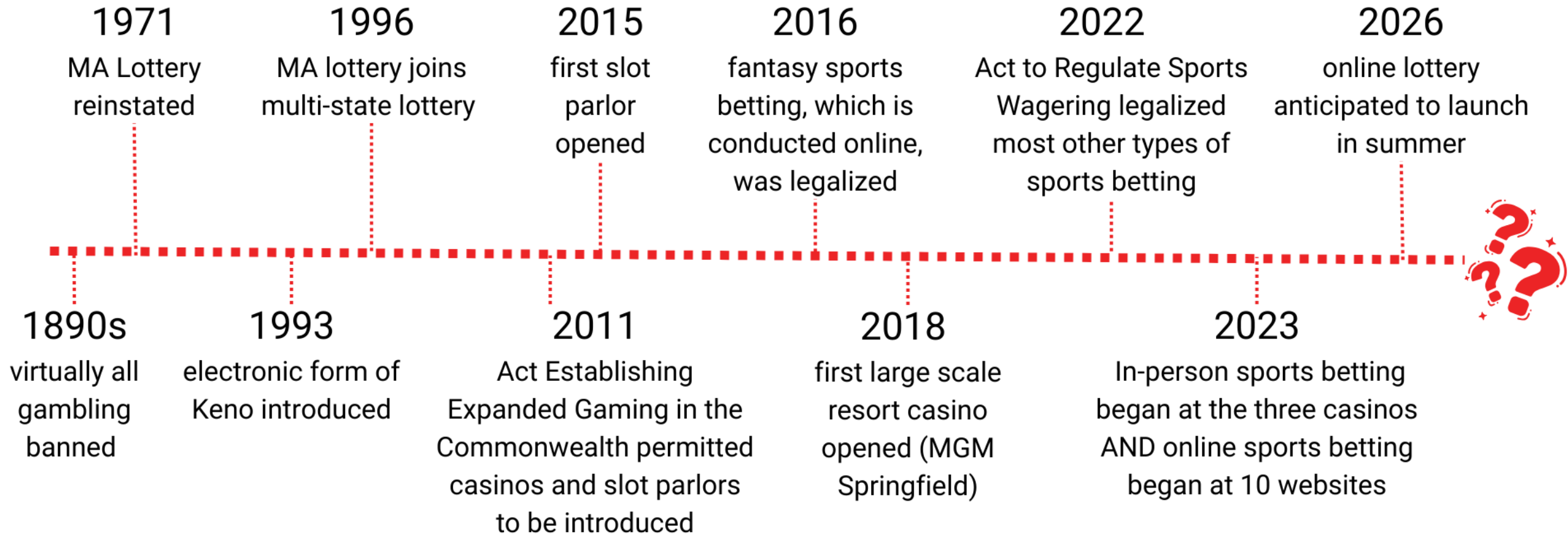


**If you encounter technical issues, please message the host, and we will do our best to assist you in resolving them.**



**Before you sign off, please take a survey to tell us how we did.**

# Legal Gambling In MA



Sources: SEIGMA, Social and Economic Impacts of Casino Introduction to Massachusetts, Oct 2024, [https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Social-and-Economic-Impacts-of-Casino-Introduction-to-Massachusetts\\_Report.pdf](https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Social-and-Economic-Impacts-of-Casino-Introduction-to-Massachusetts_Report.pdf) ; <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/12/04/ilottery-massachusetts-online-rollout-pushback>  
Note: This timeline doesn't include all forms of gambling, such as horse and dog races and charitable gambling

# ONLINE CASINOS



# Gambling Disorder and Public Health

Question:

What is  
Gambling  
Disorder?



DIAGNOSTIC  
AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF  
MENTAL DISORDERS  
(THIRD EDITION)

**1980: American Psychiatric  
Association**

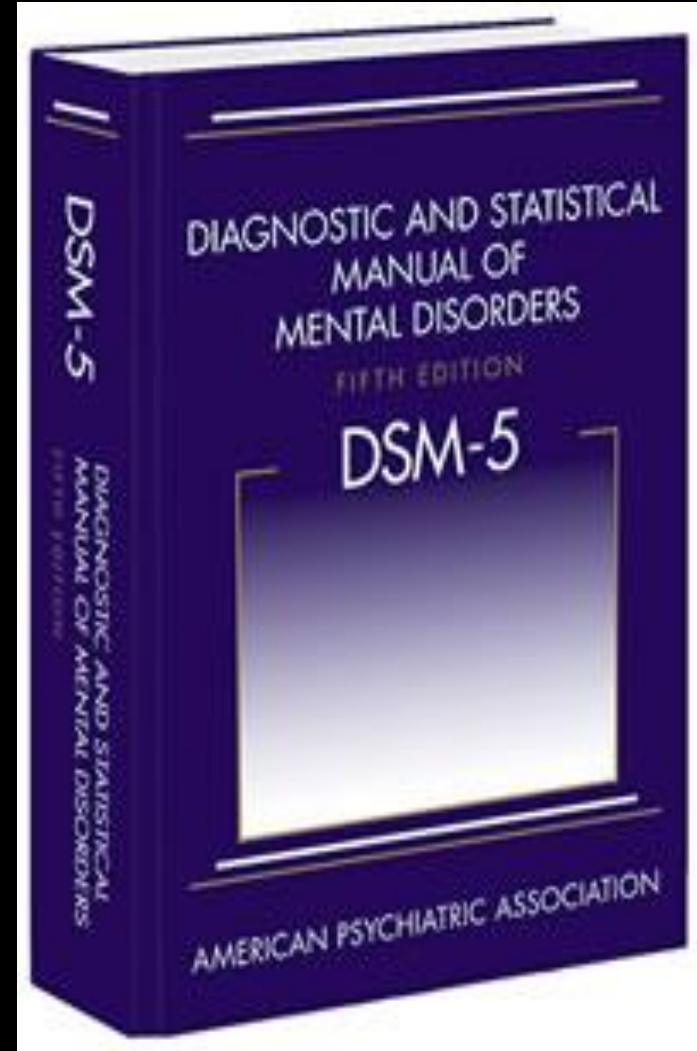
Gambling Addiction is first recognized and  
labeled an "Impulse Control Disorder".



# DSM-5 (2013)

Gambling is an addictive product just like heroin, opioids, tobacco, alcohol and cocaine.

*“After losing money gambling, often returning to get even. (This is referred to as "chasing" one's losses.)”*



# Online Gambling and Public Health

- Suicidal Ideation and Risk of Suicide
- Financial Ruin
- Loss of Career and Employment
- Divorce and Relationship Loss
- Housing Insecurity
- Loss of Parental Custody
- Domestic Violence
- Co-occurring Substance Disorders
- Mental Health Struggles
- Physical Health Struggles
- Criminal Behaviors

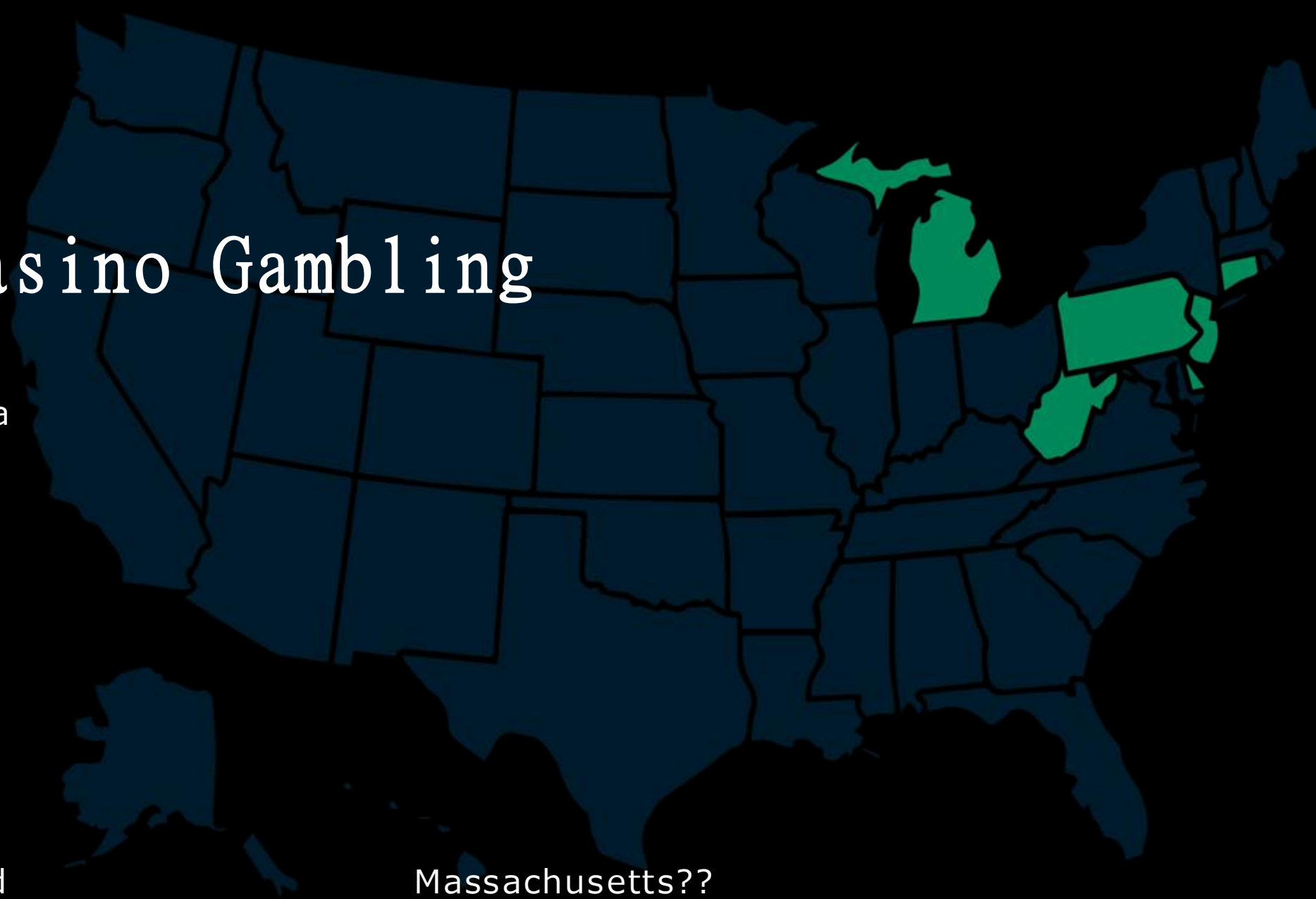




# Online Casino Gambling

- West Virginia
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Michigan
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island

Massachusetts??



What does it look like?

The image displays three promotional cards for FanDuel games, each featuring a 'Major Jackpot' of \$4,248.61. The cards are arranged horizontally. The first card is for 'FlyX Party', showing a character in a blue suit and orange mask flying. The second card is for 'Huff N' Lots of Puff', showing a cartoon wolf character. The third card is for 'FanDuel Football Blackjack', showing a football field. Each card has a purple 'Exclusive' banner in the top left and a heart icon in the bottom right.

Game Title	Game Type	Min Bet	Max Bet	Major Jackpot
FlyX Party	Slots	\$0.05	\$150	\$4,248.61
Huff N' Lots of Puff	Slots	\$0.20	\$100	\$4,248.61
FanDuel Football...	Tables	\$0.10	\$10,000	\$4,248.61



Slots | \$0.20 - \$180



Willy Wonka World o...

Slots | \$0.20 - \$90

Slots | \$0.50 - \$400



Samurai 888 Spin...

Slots | \$0.50 - \$700

Slots | \$0.50 - \$500



Buffalo Gold...

Slots | \$0.60 - \$30





DRAFTKINGS  
**MULTIHAND  
BLACKJACK**

The logo features a crown icon above the word "DRAFTKINGS". Below it, the words "MULTIHAND" and "BLACKJACK" are stacked in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is dark blue with a subtle pattern of playing cards.



**CASH  
ERUPTION**

The logo features the words "CASH" and "ERUPTION" stacked in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The background is a fiery, orange and red explosion or eruption.

© 2021 IGT







**New**

**FROST QUEEN'S  
FORTUNE**

**Win up to \$150,000**

⋮



**New**

**THE SANTA  
CLAW**

**Win up to \$300,000**

⋮



**Santa's  
Side Bets**

**Win up to \$30,000**

⋮



# *S.302, An Act addressing economic, health and social harms caused by sports betting would...*

- Bans **in-play bets** and **proposition bets**.
  - In-play bets: Gambling that occurs after a game has started (next team to score or
  - Proposition bets: Bets on things not directly related to the game's outcome (the number of strikes thrown by a pitcher, or will the mascot do a funny dance)
- Bans sports-betting ads during televised sporting events.
- Adds agents and promoters to the list of those prohibited from wagering on any sporting event.
- Limits what people can bet each day unless gambling entities conduct affordability checks for bettors and determined that they can exceed the limits based on the amounts they have in a bank.
- Bans employees of sports wagering entities from receiving any compensation based on how much said employees induce bettors to gamble.
- Raises the taxation rate on online sports wagering operators from 20% to 51%.
- Doubles the amount that each sports wagering operator must contribute annually to the Public Health Trust Fund.
- Adds to the gaming commission research agenda an assessment of links between problem gambling and suicides.
- Requires sports wagering operators to release anonymized data on sports bettors to an experienced nonprofit research entity.
- Deems certain types of sports-wagering advertising as deceptive under the consumer protection statute.



Massachusetts Department  
of Public Health



# **Problem Gambling: A Public Health Approach to Mitigating Harm in the Commonwealth**

January 9, 2026

Victor Ortiz, MSW

Director, Office of Problem Gambling Services

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

# Department of Public Health Vision and Mission

## Vision

An equitable and just public health system that supports optimal well-being for all people in Massachusetts, centering those with systemically and culturally oppressed identities and circumstances.

## Mission

To promote and protect health and wellness and prevent injury and illness for all people, prioritizing racial equity in health by improving equitable access to quality public health and health care services and partnering with communities most impacted by health inequities and structural racism.



# Office of Problem Gambling Services Vision

To ensure a **comprehensive and integrated public health response** that will include utilization of data to inform initiatives, engagement of communities with cultural intelligence and humility.

# Expanded Gaming Act in the Commonwealth

**The Expanded Gaming Act (2011)** allows for up to three destination resort casinos to be opened in three geographically diverse regions across the state. Additionally, a single slots facility can be competitively awarded for one location statewide.



**The Act to Regulate Sports Wagering (2022)** in the Commonwealth allows for sports wagering at the established resort casinos and across online sports betting platforms.

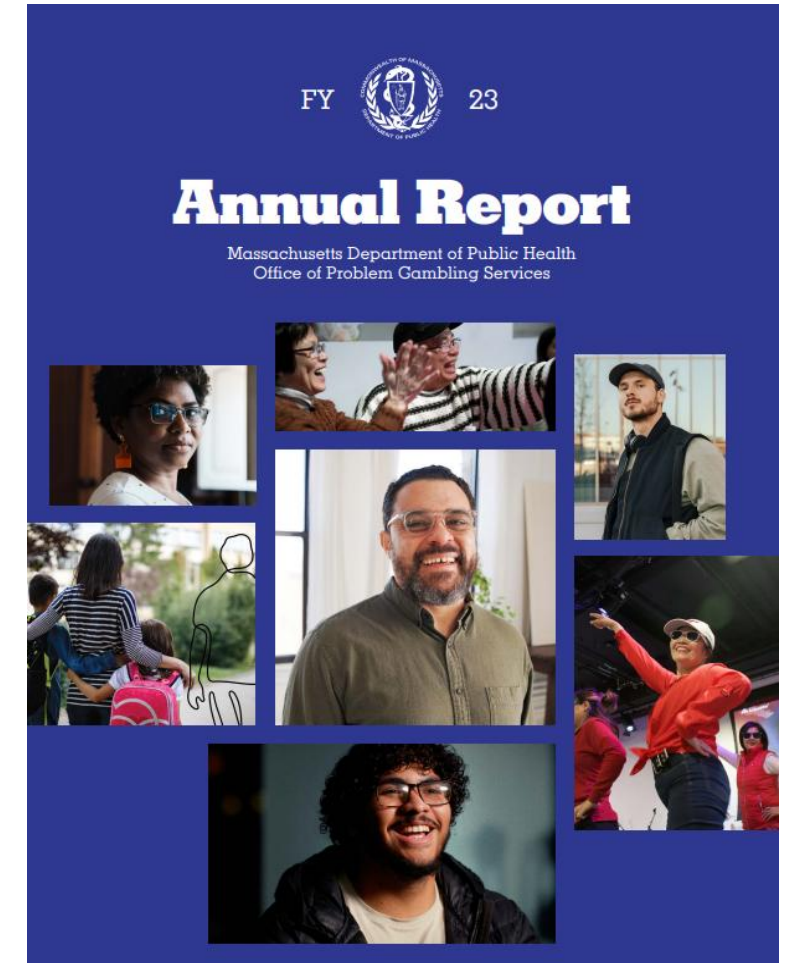
# Public Health Trust Fund

**The Expanding Gaming Act established the Public Health Trust Fund (PHTF)** to allocate significant resources to research, prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling and related issues.

LINK: [Public Health Trust Fund | Mass.gov](#)

**The OPGS Annual Report** highlights programmatic milestones, the budget, and promotes our commitment to transparency.

LINK: [OPGS Annual Report](#)





# Social Determinants of Health

**Problem gambling** is governed by a complex set of interrelating factors, causes and determinants ranging from biology and family history, to social norms and existing statutes (Messerlian, Derevensky, Gupta, 2005).

The **Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS)** takes a community-driven approach that is rooted in the Social Determinants of Health, with a racial equity lens.



Session 6: Improving Health Outcomes



# Equity in Action!



Surveillance  
and Community  
Engagement



Programs  
and Services



Workforce  
Training and  
Supports



Public Awareness



Technical  
Assistance and  
Evaluation

# Problem Gambling: A Public Health Perspective

It encourages a shift from **a narrow focus on just individual gamblers to a broader consideration of the social setting**; in other words, **the social, cultural, and economic factors** that influence the spread and patterns of a disorder (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

We must understand the historical and life context to inform public health strategies.

Research indicates that **“one size fits all” approaches are ineffective.**



# Problem Gambling: Data to Action

Since 2016, OPGS has engaged over **3,000 individuals** at the community level along with 40 community partners to inform over 25 initiatives.

OPGS has produced over **13 community engagement reports** centered on our Annual Stakeholder Listening Sessions.

In 2023, OPGS established a **Data to Action Framework**, aimed at building a surveillance of problem gambling in the Commonwealth.

## DPH Office of Problem Gambling Services: Data to Action Framework



### Background

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS) is committed to promoting the optimal health and well-being of all residents in the Commonwealth and to ensuring they are provided with healthy and equitable communities to work and live in. In support of this mission, OPGS works to prevent and mitigate the potential harms and negative consequences associated with gambling on individuals, families, and communities.

Decades of research has demonstrated that gambling is a complex behavior that is intertwined with myriad individual, social, and structural factors. Large-scale epidemiological studies have also revealed that some groups and communities bear a disproportionate burden of gambling-related harms and consequences – including individuals with mental health disorders, substance use disorders, and communities of color.

Historically, efforts to mitigate gambling-related harm have centered on the promotion of individual responsibility and have ignored the broader life and community contexts in which these behaviors, harms, and consequences occur. To directly and proactively address this disconnect, OPGS has adopted a public health approach that promotes the examination of health-related phenomena through a population-based lens, and explores the relationship between individuals, their environments, and gambling behavior. Fundamental to this approach is active consideration and exploration of root causes, structural factors, social determinants of health, intersectionality, and community context – including authentic community engagement and approaching these issues from a strengths-based rather than deficit-based perspective.



### OPGS Data To Action Framework

Guided by the public health principles of engagement, empowerment, and equity, the OPGS Data to Action Framework was developed to illustrate the process through which public health data and community experience can be leveraged to inform and support each other in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop. **Respecting community members as authentic partners, building partnerships,**

February 2023

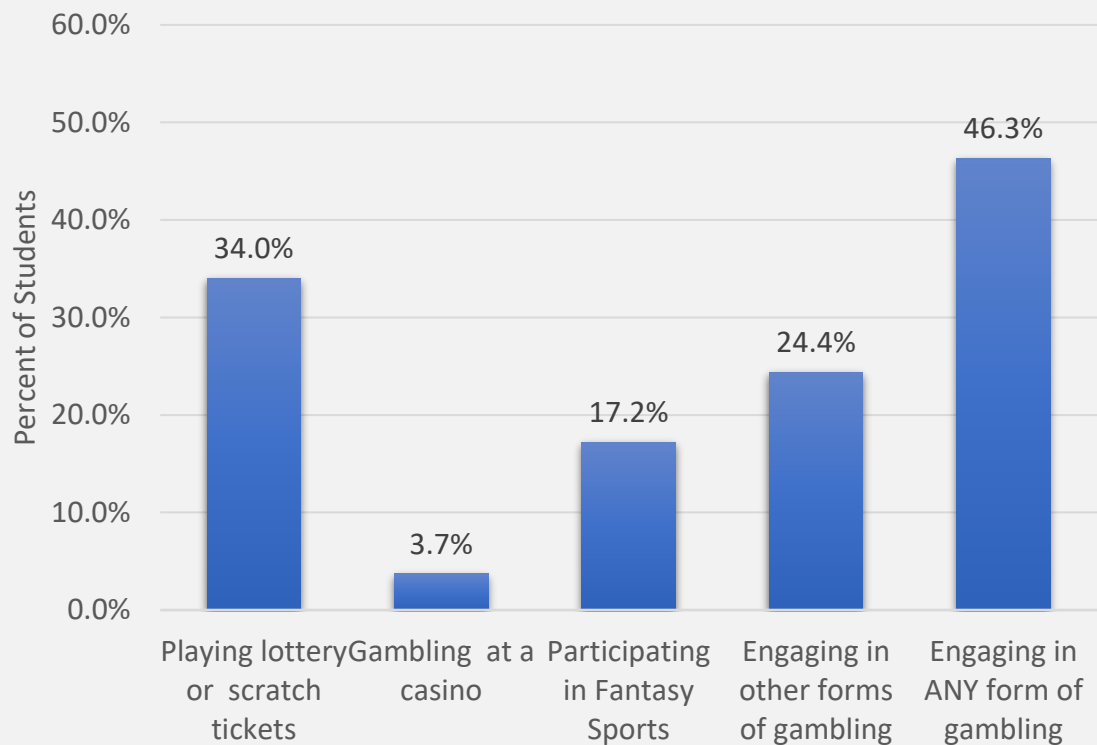
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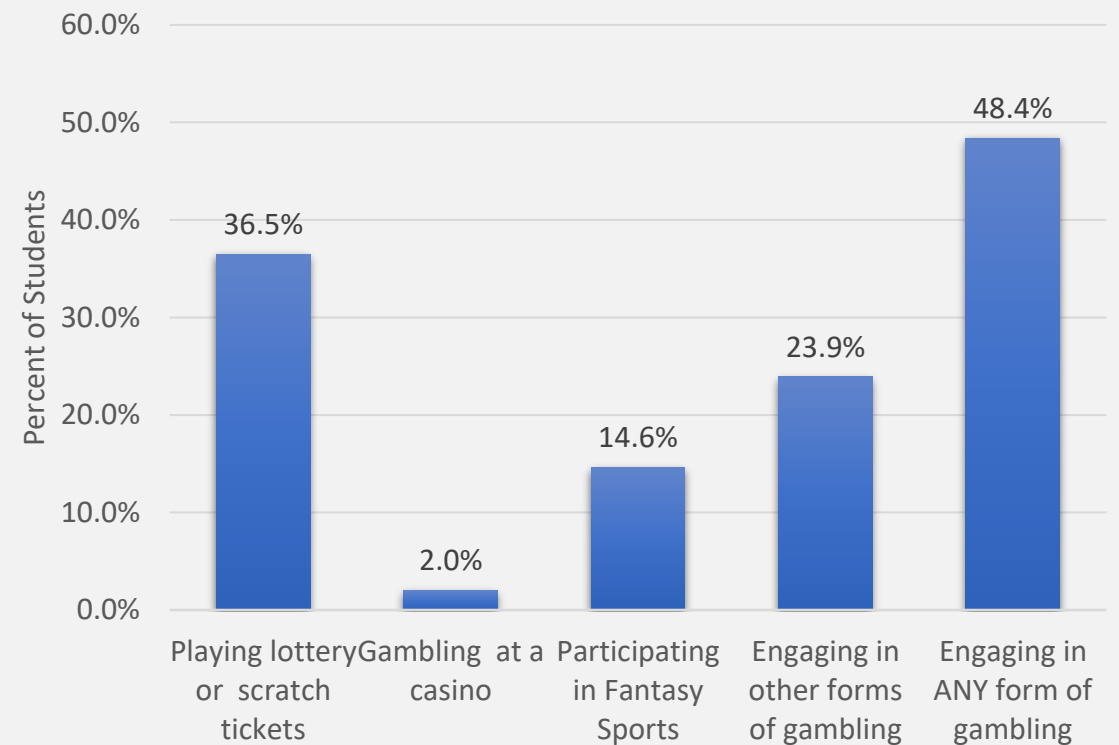
# 2023: Gambling Activity Participation Prevalence

**46.3%** of high school students, and **48.4%** of middle school students reported engaging in some form of gambling in the last year.

**2023 High School Gambling Activity Participation in the Past Year - YHS**



**2023 Middle School Gambling Activity Participation in the Past Year - YHS**

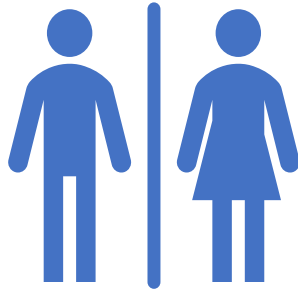


# Demographics



**There was no significant relationship between grade level and gambling participation for MS or HS students.**

**Among HS students, females had 39% decreased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to males.**



**Among MS and HS students Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals had decreased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to White individuals.**

# Substance Use



**MS and HS students who reported any lifetime alcohol use had 133% and 109% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.**

**MS and HS students who reported any lifetime drug use had 104% and 37% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.**



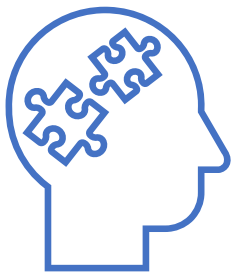
**MS and HS students who reported any lifetime vape use had 80% and 46% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.**

# Mental Health



**MS students who reported being sad almost every day for 2 weeks or more in the past 12 months had 57% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**

**MS students who reported purposeful self injury in the past 12 months had 46% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**



**MS students who reported ever seriously considering attempting suicide in the past 12 months had 44% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**

# Violence



**MS and HS students who reported bullying someone in the past 12 months had 137% and 70% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**

**MS who reported witnessing family violence in the past 12 months had 98% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**



**HS students who being stopped by police in their neighborhood in the past 12 months had 149% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to those who did not.**

# OPGS' Approach to Prevention

OPGS takes a comprehensive and strategic approach to the development of problem gambling prevention services in the Commonwealth. **Problem gambling prevention must be grounded in the principles of health and racial equity.**

**OPGS' prevention strategies are captured across 4 domains:**

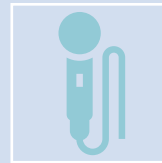
- 1. Data and Community Engagement**
- 2. Programs and Services**
- 3. Public Awareness**
- 4. Prevention Tools and Resources**



# Massachusetts Photovoice Project



The Photovoice Project is a prevention initiative that uses a youth-centered and youth-driven approach to engage local youth in using photography to explore underage gambling and related public health issues in their community.



Youth use their learning from the photovoice process to identify a problem in their community, learn about the root causes of this problem, and identify a set of actions that can be taken to contribute as solutions to the identified problem. This approach places youth at the center of community change.



**OPGS currently funds 7 sites across Massachusetts at \$150,000 per site. This is an annual investment of \$1.05M in youth prevention.**

# Youth Leaders in Problem Gambling Prevention



In 2024, OPGS launched the Youth Leaders in Problem Gambling Prevention Project.



The purpose of the Youth Leaders Project is to empower youth to lead and develop problem gambling prevention, advocacy, and community strategies to raise awareness of the risks of gambling and associated issues throughout the Commonwealth.




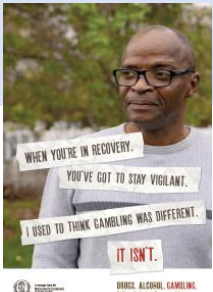







The project will utilize a peer-to-peer model that will provide youth with the skills and knowledge to become change agents who are committed to raising awareness of and preventing underage gambling. The program will include activities to ensure participants reach academic success, a key protective factor for youth.



**OPGS awarded 3 community-based organizations an estimated \$700,000 per year for the implementation of this project. This is an annual investment of \$2.1M in youth prevention.**

# LET'S GET REAL ABOUT GAMBLING

GENERAL AUDIENCE			PRIORITY POPULATIONS				
Problem Gambling Helpline	General materials	Platform	Men of color w/ a history of substance misuse	Youth & parents	Older adults	Asian Americans	College students
<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Worried about your gambling? Help is on the line.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Let's get real about gambling.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Let's get real about gambling.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Different stories. Same problem.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Teen gambling. It's a risk.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Discover the many alternatives to gambling.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Problem gambling can make you miss out on life.</i>	<b>TAGLINE</b> <i>Spot the warning signs.</i>
<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Logo Media Campaigns: 2021, 2022, 2023	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Website Explainer Video Brochure	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Platform Badge Media Campaign: March - June 2023	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Media Campaigns: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Toolkit & webpage Holiday Lottery Media Campaigns: 2020, 2021, 2022	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Media Campaigns: 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 Webpage	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Media Campaign: June - Aug 2023 Webpage	<b>EXECUTIONS</b> Media Campaign: Nov-Dec 2023
				 			

Massachusetts Department  
of Public Health



# Key Principles for a Public Health Path Forward





- **Utilize data** to inform the allocation of resources for precise public health.
- **Focus on the social determinants of health** to address, plan, prepare, and develop problem gambling services.
- **Engage communities** to inform, develop, and implement services with an explicit emphasis on marginalized populations.
- **Break down silos** and create meaningful integration that will promote wellness for everyone.



# Save the Date!

## 2026 Massachusetts Problem Gambling Conference

### Equity in Action: Celebrating Community Voices

**May 20th, 2026**  
**Springfield, Massachusetts**



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**Thank You!**

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# Connect with DPH



X: [@MassDPH](https://twitter.com/MassDPH)



LinkedIn:

[Massachusetts Department of Public Health](https://www.linkedin.com/company/massachusetts-department-of-public-health)



[mass.gov/DPH](https://mass.gov/DPH)



**Career Exploration**

**Social Skills**

**Life skills**

**Academic Support**

**Collaboration**

**Professional Development**

**Leadership**

**Resources**

**Community Engagement**

**Stipends**

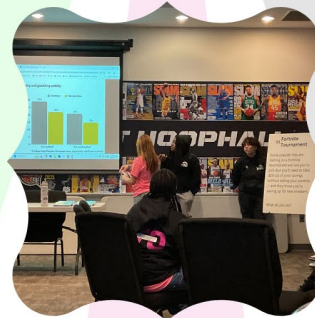
**Goal planning**

**Therapeutic mentors**

**Peer mentorship**

**BTO**  
BEAT THE ODDS

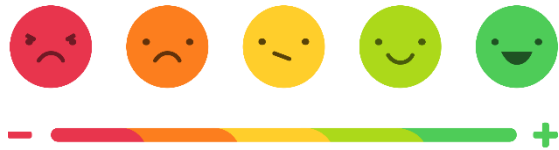
**Mental Health Awareness & Problem Gambling Prevention**



**BTO**  
BEAT THE ODDS

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services





**Before you sign off, please take a  
1-minute survey to give us feedback**



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/igambling>