

FREE WEBINAR

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

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



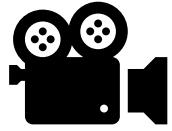
**State Representative
Lindsay Sabadosa**
1st Hampshire District



Jan 9
12-1:15pm



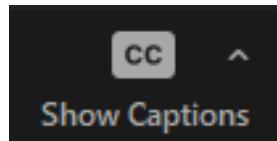
Housekeeping



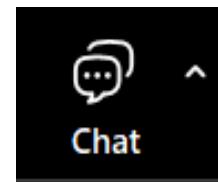
We are recording this webinar.



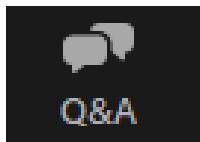
The recording and materials will be emailed to registrants and posted on our website.



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



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



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.



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://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?

DSM-III

DIAGNOSTIC
AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF
MENTAL DISORDERS
(THIRD EDITION)

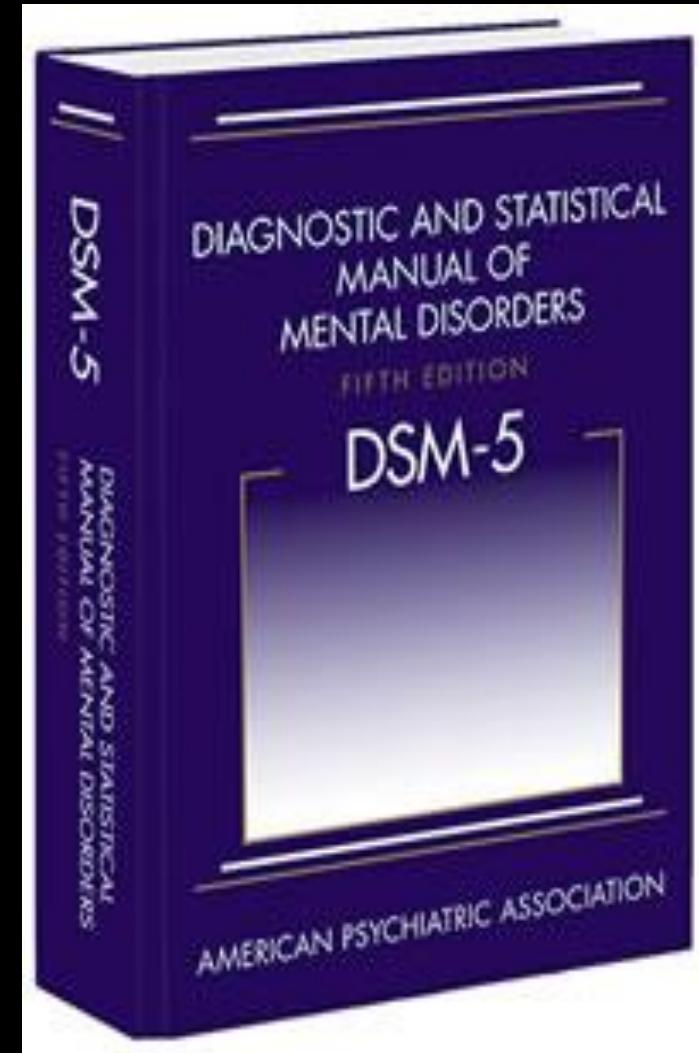
1980: American Psychiatric Association

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

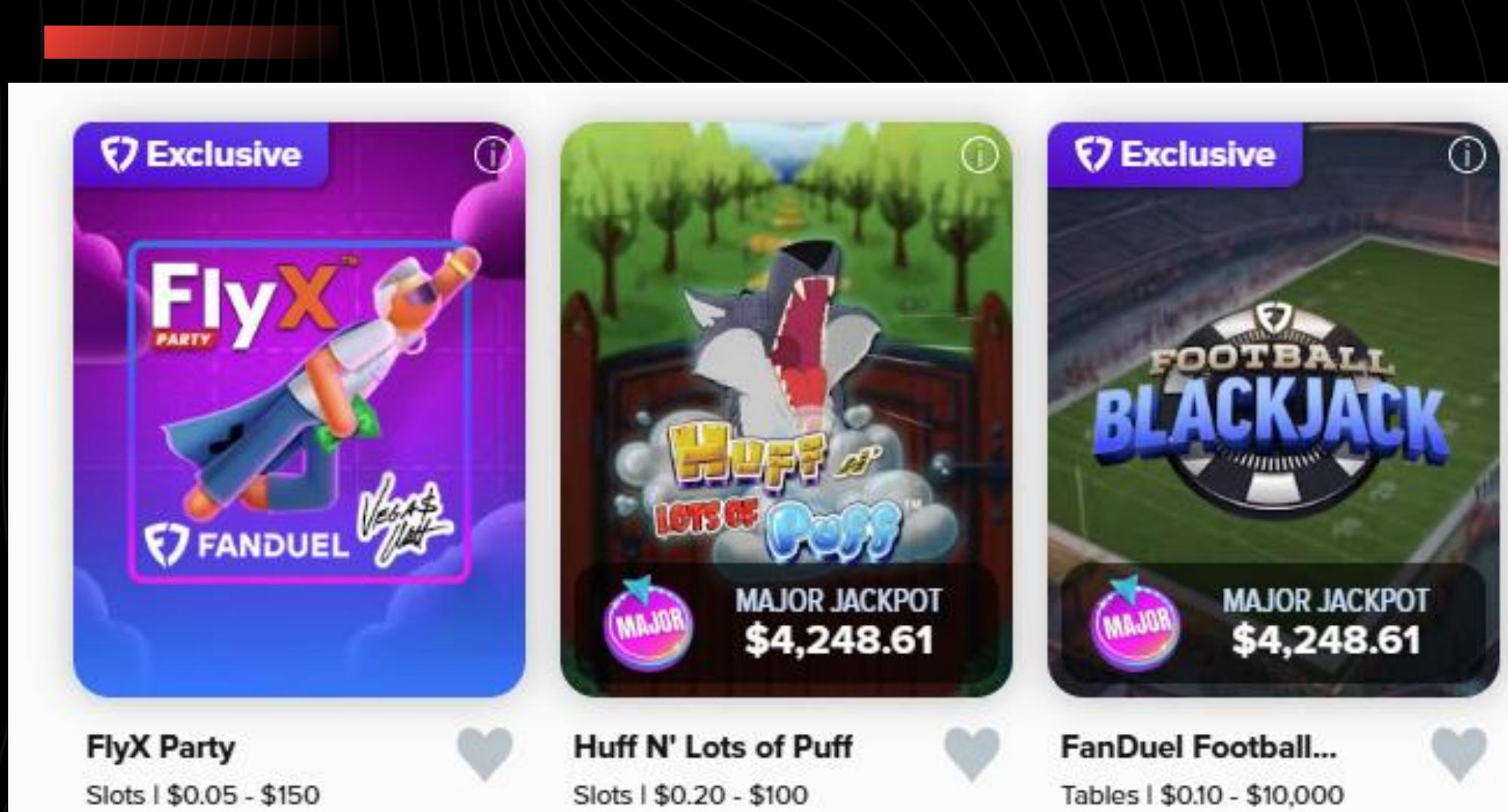


Online Casino Gambling

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

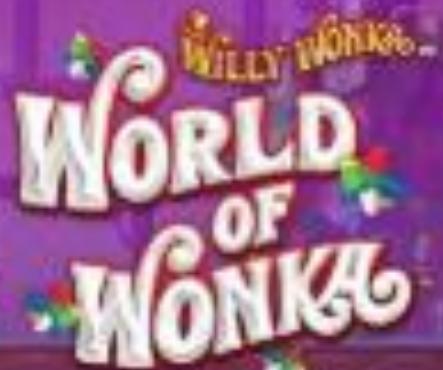
Massachusetts??

What does it look like?



Slots | \$0.20 - \$180

 **Exclusive**



MINOR JACKPOT
\$984.73

[Willy Wonka World o...](#)

Slots | \$0.20 - \$90

Slots | \$0.50 - \$400

 **Exclusive**



MINOR JACKPOT
\$984.73

[Samurai 888 Spin...](#)

Slots | \$0.50 - \$700

Slots | \$0.50 - \$500

 i



MINOR JACKPOT
\$984.73

[Buffalo Gold...](#)

Slots | \$0.60 - \$30







Win up to \$150,000



Win up to \$300,000



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.

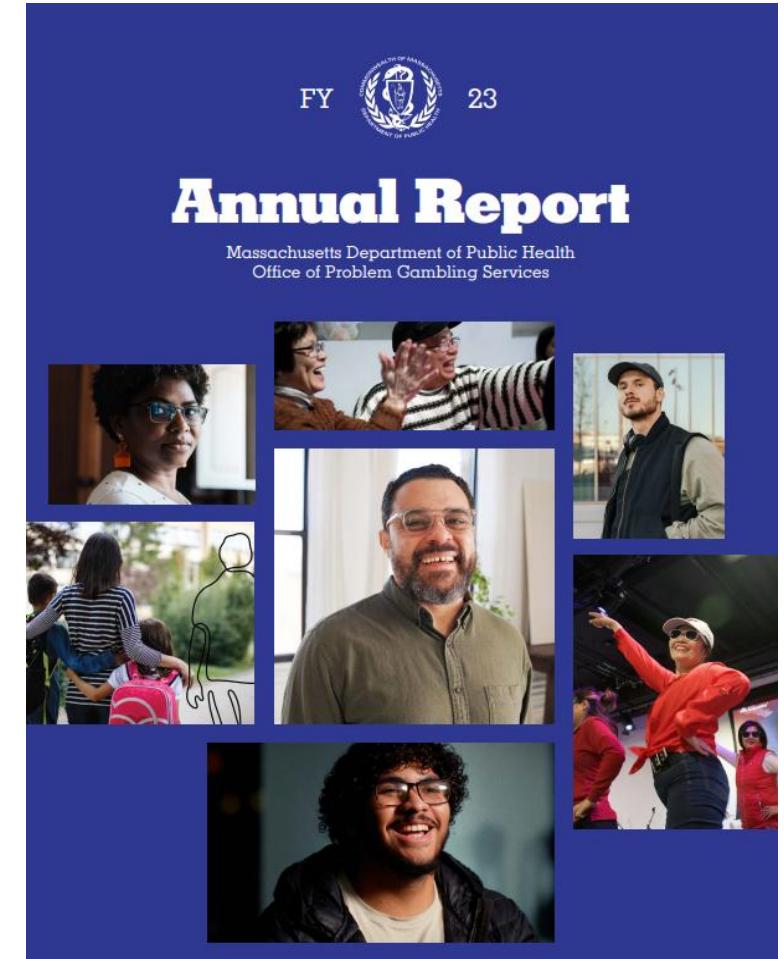
Public Health Trust Fund

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.



Source: Massachusetts State Health Assessment, 2017

Session 6: Improving Health Outcomes



Equity in Action!



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,**

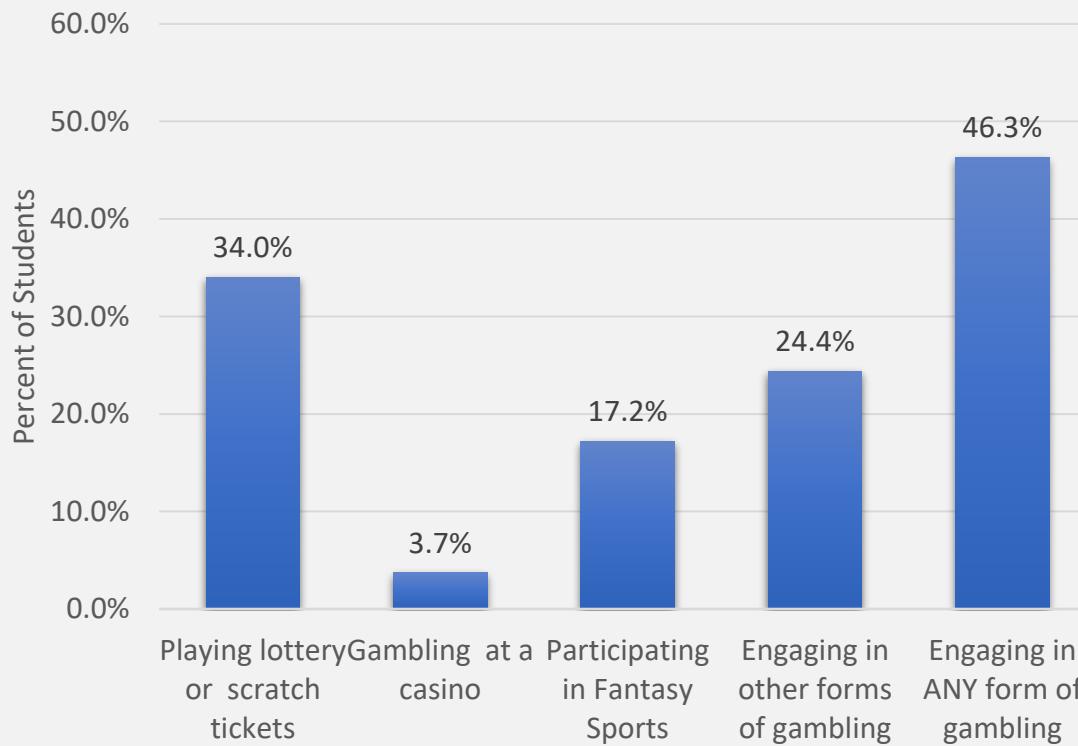
February 2023

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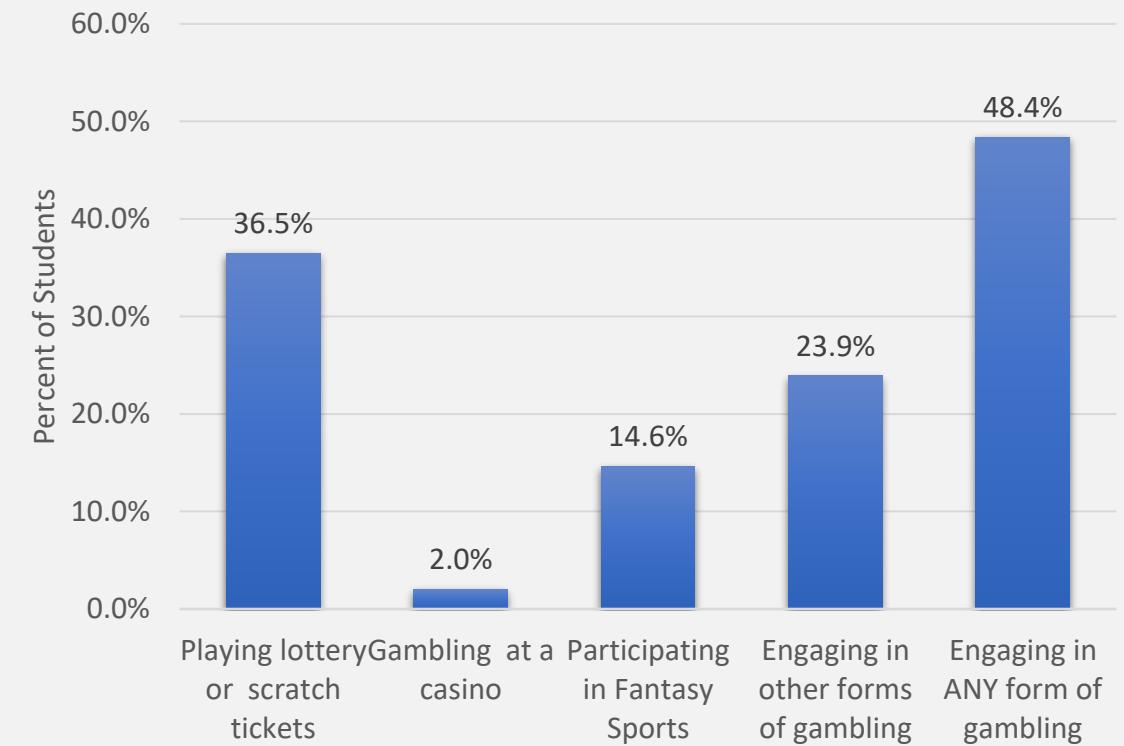
2023: Gambling Activity Participation Prevalence

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

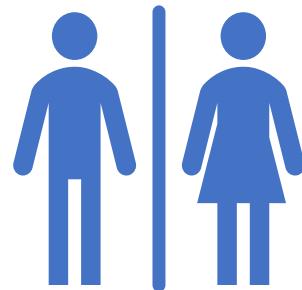


Demographics



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.

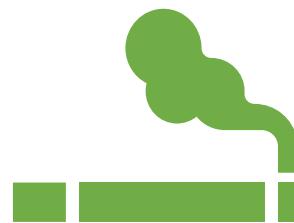
Substance Use



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.



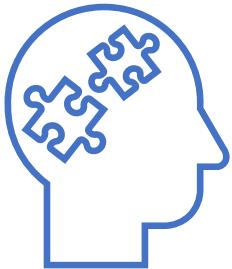
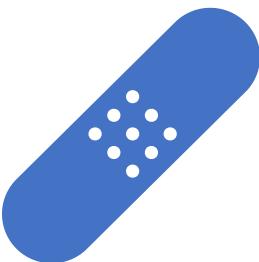
MS and HS students who reported any lifetime vape use had 80% and 46% increased odds of gambling in the last 12 months compared to never users.

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	
TAGLINE <i>Worried about your gambling? Help is on the line.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Let's get real about gambling.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Let's get real about gambling.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Different stories. Same problem.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Teen gambling. It's a risk.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Discover the many alternatives to gambling.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Problem gambling can make you miss out on life.</i>	TAGLINE <i>Spot the warning signs.</i>	
EXECUTIONS Logo Media Campaigns: 2021, 2022, 2023	EXECUTIONS Website Explainer Video Brochure	EXECUTIONS Platform Badge Media Campaign: March - June 2023	EXECUTIONS Media Campaigns: 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023	EXECUTIONS Toolkit & webpage Holiday Lottery Media Campaigns: 2020, 2021, 2022	EXECUTIONS Media Campaigns: 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 Webpage	EXECUTIONS Media Campaign: June - Aug 2023 Webpage	EXECUTIONS 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

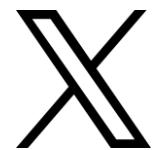
Equity in Action: Celebrating Community Voices

May 20th, 2026
Springfield, Massachusetts



Thank You!

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

Career Exploration

Social Skills

Life skills

Peer mentorship

Therapeutic mentors

Academic Support

Collaboration



Goal planning

Professional Development

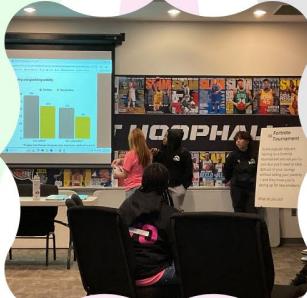
Leadership

Stipends

Community Engagement

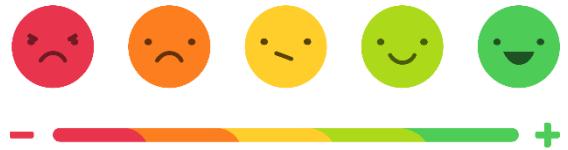
Resources

Field Trips



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>