



FY24 Annual Report

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Office of Problem Gambling Services



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**Message from Dr. Robert Goldstein,
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

Dear Colleagues,

Gambling opportunities in the Commonwealth continued to grow in 2024, as a result of an increase in sports wagering and in combination with the presence of casinos in the Commonwealth. This year, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS) put equity into action by expanding programs and services for those disproportionately impacted by problem gambling.

Through initiatives centered on data and evidence, the Office sought to mitigate harms associated with gambling by using strategies across the continuum of care, including prevention and treatment. In 2024, OPGS established its Data to Action Framework, which aims to help us better understand the effects of gambling in the Commonwealth. Guided by the public health principles of engagement, empowerment, and equity, the Framework illustrates the process through which public health data and community experience can be leveraged to inform and support one another to address community needs.

This work was supported by the Office's FY24 budget of \$29.2 million, which represents an increase of \$12 million from FY23. OPGS' budget is comprised of various sources, including the Public Health Trust Fund, and allows the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to address problem gambling through strategies that include surveillance, prevention, intervention, and treatment support.

I am proud to share this FY24 Annual Report, which highlights the key accomplishments of the Office and its partners in their efforts to aid those at risk and those affected by problem gambling. Lastly, I want to thank our community members, partners, and stakeholders for their commitment to achieving health and racial equity for all.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'R.G.' with a large, looping flourish at the bottom.

Dr. Robert Goldstein, Commissioner

Who We Are

The Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS) is an Office within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), a Department under the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the largest secretariat in Massachusetts state government. Since its inception in 2016, OPGS has engaged over 3,000 community stakeholders and 40 community partners to promote equity and empowerment and minimize the harms associated with gambling.

What We Do

OPGS is committed to the optimal health and well-being of all residents of the Commonwealth and to ensuring they are provided with healthy and equitable communities to work and live in. We work with community partners in specific areas across the state to provide problem gambling prevention, intervention, recovery, and treatment services to those who need them the most. Everyone should have the opportunity to be healthy. Everyone has the right to good health. To make this a reality, we must work together to remove barriers so that everyone has an opportunity to improve their lives and their health. This is reflected in all the work we do, which is organized into the following categories:



OPGS' purpose, mission and vision support the DPH mission

Purpose

Work to prevent and address problem gambling and related issues in Massachusetts.

Vision

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

Mission

The Office works every day to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling and related health concerns through a variety of community-level strategies that ensure a strong public health response to problem gambling.

Our guiding principles

Community Engagement

OPGS serves the community, is inspired by the community, is guided by the needs and insights of the community, and empowers the community, including individuals and groups who are passionate about addressing problem gambling and associated health concerns, are at risk for problem gambling, or are struggling with problem gambling and its ill effects.

Partnership

OPGS actively seeks to connect with others who share the Office's vision and principles while providing complementary knowledge, skills, and resources. The Office works with an array of public and private partners on a joint, comprehensive, and integrated public health response to problem gambling and associated health concerns.

Public Trust

As part of a publicly funded state agency, OPGS has a responsibility to the people of Massachusetts to ensure that all of its operations and programs are administered with integrity and strong internal controls.

Racial Equity

OPGS adheres to the definition of racial equity put forth by the Center for Social Inclusion as "both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one's socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live."

Public Health Trust Fund

In 2011, The Expanded Gaming Act (G.L. c.23k) was passed, allowing for up to three destination resort casinos across the Commonwealth. The Gaming Act also created the Public Health Trust Fund (PHTF) from a percentage of the tax on gross gaming revenues. The purpose of the PHTF was to allocate resources to research, prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services for problem gambling and related issues.

In 2023, the state legislature passed An Act to Regulate Sports Wagering (Bill H.5164). The act built off the framework of the Expanded Gaming Act and further increased opportunities for gambling within the Commonwealth. Like the Expanded Gaming Act, this legislation allocates a portion of resources to the PHTF. The introduction of sports wagering has changed the gambling environment, resulting in increased access that has raised concerns about related harms.

In light of this change, OPGS continues to lead and enhance its work to mitigate harms. In FY24, OPGS focused on prevention and treatment, while also establishing its data and evaluation division. As part of this work the Office developed the [Data to Action Framework](#), which ensures that problem gambling data is reliable, equitable, accessible, and actionable, resulting in an optimal public health response to problem gambling in the Commonwealth.

Through the PHTF, OPGS has established the foundation for leading the public health response to problem gambling across the Commonwealth. The Office critically analyzes data, works alongside communities, and promotes equity to ensure that communities and individuals who experience the greatest inequities are at the center of its efforts to mitigate harm.

To learn more about the Public Health Trust Fund, [please visit our website](#).

“The purpose of the PHTF was to allocate resources to research, prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services for problem gambling and related issues.”

- Participant

Massachusetts Department
of Public Health



OPGS by the Numbers - Spending

In FY24, the Office of Problem Gambling Services continued to serve Massachusetts residents most at risk for developing problem gambling behaviors. The final budget for FY24 was \$29,263,103.

Total annual spending across these programs in FY24 was **\$13,961,353**.

Please see the table below for our FY24 spending per program.

Program / Service	FY24
Photovoice Project	\$ 935,136
Ambassador Project	\$ 587,559
AAPI Community Empowerment Initiative	\$ 170,000
Beat the Odds (Community Level Health Project, Springfield)	\$ 999,893
Project RISE (Community Level Health Project, Everett)	\$ 1,642,666
Suicide and Problem Gambling Training for Suicide Prevention Workforce	\$ 60,000
Public Awareness Campaigns	\$ 3,616,772
Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse	\$ 30,706
Technical Assistance (TA) of Prevention Services	\$ 981,885
Stakeholder Listening Sessions	\$ 124,750
Prevention Program Evaluation	\$ 250,000
MA Problem Gambling Helpline Services	\$ 332,377
Project Build Up	\$ 499,999
Technical Assistance for Problem Gambling Treatment	\$ 1,349,765
Veterans and Problem Gambling Education	\$ 100,000
Community Wellness Project	\$ 125,906
Data Management and Analytical Services	\$ 106,590
Staffing and Program Support	\$ 2,047,349

An additional \$15,301,750 was allocated for the planning and development of new initiatives. This balance will be rolled over into FY25 for the launch and implementation of these programs and services.

Prevention

Prevention is defined as the development of personal skills and community resources, while also working to change harmful social-environmental conditions.

Environmental conditions play a major role in health outcomes, including gambling harms. Prevention is a key strategy in the mitigation of harm associated with gambling and is continuously informed by evidence and data. OPGS continues to deliver comprehensive, community-centered, and culturally responsive prevention services.



2024 Massachusetts Problem Gambling Conference

On May 17, 2024, OPGS hosted its annual Problem Gambling Conference, themed Equity in Action: Working Together to Mitigate Harms Across the Commonwealth. The conference featured more than 12 workshops across the continuum of care (including awareness, prevention, treatment, and recovery support), 38 guest speakers, and 13 education tables. Our esteemed Plenary Session speakers—Assistant

Commissioner of Health Equity Dr. Hafsatou “Fifi” Diop, State Senator John F. Keenan, and Dr. Deborah Haskins—set the tone for the day.

More than 300 guests participated in the largest state-based problem gambling conference in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!



Massachusetts Photovoice Project

The Massachusetts Photovoice Project (MPP) is a prevention initiative that engages local youth in using the Photovoice method to explore underage gambling and related public health issues in their communities.

Youth use their learning from the Photovoice process to identify a problem in their community, learn about the root causes, and develop solutions through calls to action.

Vendors: Cambridge Health Alliance; Gandara; High Point Brockton; High Point Plymouth; NEW Health; LUK, Inc.; Old Colony YMCA

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Youth across the seven organizations exhibited their photographs at the 2024 Massachusetts Problem Gambling Conference.
- More than 90 youth in grades 7-12 were trained to be catalysts of change to raise awareness about underage gambling.
- Each organization hosted and participated in a Caregiver Education and Recreation event which provides an opportunity for caregivers to learn about underage gambling and help increase the number of protective factors for young people.
- NEW Health in Charlestown hosted a tabling event during Problem Gambling Awareness Month to educate community members about problem gambling and provide free resources to learn more about underage gambling.
- High Point Treatment Center in Brockton facilitated a peer mental health day for 75 students at Kennedy Elementary School.
- Each organization participated in a Community Action Plan, which allows youth to lead the development of a change they would like to make in their community to address a concern they identified during the Photovoice process.



Massachusetts Photovoice Project

90

youth participated in the Photovoice project across seven organizations

7

community exhibitions hosted throughout Massachusetts with community members, stakeholders, students, and their caregivers

7

events held for caregivers, family, and guardians

“A lot of people don’t realize that gambling is as prevalent as it is. After being a part of Photovoice, I notice it more now just knowing where to look for it. I know now how and where to get someone help if they need support.”

- High Point Plymouth

“I realized that I don’t [have] much trouble with public speaking and I actually have the ability to connect with people.”

- Cambridge Health Alliance

“Taking out the camera and showing a live view of the kids and how involved they are ... when you ask those questions and get that perspective from them it shows how much knowledge they have and how much information they’re able to retain.”

- Old Colony YMCA

Community Level Health Project, Springfield - Beat the Odds

Through a robust community needs assessment process, the Community Level Health Project (CLHP) in Springfield identified youth mental health as a high priority health concern. As part of its pilot phase, the CLHP-Springfield made a data-driven and community-prioritized recommendation to DPH on how to address mental health and problem gambling-related issues,

which resulted in the Beat the Odds (BTO) program. Beat the Odds is a youth-led group peer mentoring program that focuses on mental health, including raising awareness of mental health, educating the community and young people about mental health, and providing resources and support to address mental health needs in the community.

Vendor: Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHI)

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Successfully introduced three subgroups to the Beat the Odds program to streamline the great work being done within different content areas:

- The data to action subgroup reviewed the Springfield Youth Mental Health Survey data
- The content creators subgroup developed social media content to encourage attendance at upcoming events and to increase education about underage gambling and mental health
- The event planning subgroup supported efforts to plan community-based events to distribute information about mental health and related topic areas
- Pioneered the Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling Prevention training, designed by the Massachusetts Center of Excellence for Problem Gambling Prevention, which is designed to identify risk and protective factors associated with problem gambling and describe the impact problem gambling may have on individuals and communities.
- Collaborated with other OPGS programs, such as the Massachusetts Photovoice Project, the Ambassador Project, the Asian American Pacific Islander Empowerment Project, as well as with other youth groups like Gandara's Impact Center, Stop Access Coalition, and A Queen's Narrative, reaching over 83 young people in the Greater Springfield area.
- Hosted numerous trainings and workshops that were accessible for parents, guardians, mentors, teachers, and other adults in the community, which resulted in more than 90 adults who support youth in the Springfield area.

Community Level Health Project, Springfield - Beat the Odds

1,792 individuals
trained

30 youth participated
in the program

84 events hosted throughout
Greater Springfield

“It was nice to hear from one of the youth that [participating in this project] made them feel good, to be affirmed that they are smart, and have great ideas. I could feel the pride [he had] in his work.”

- Participant

“I believe this program is a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved and I have seen nothing but positivity all around.”

- Participant

Public Awareness Campaigns

Public Awareness Campaigns are a key component of OPGS' prevention framework and are part of the Let's Get Real About Gambling platform, aimed at promoting frank conversations about gambling as an issue of health equity. These public awareness campaigns

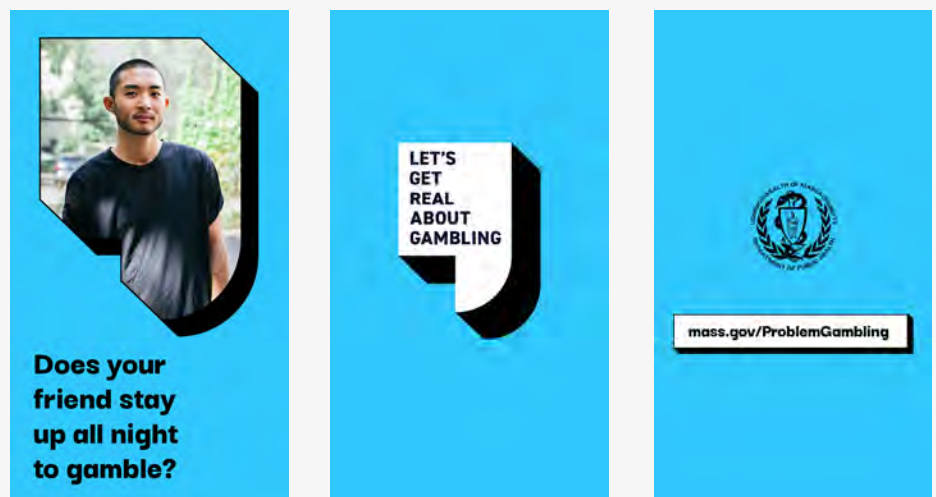
have used comprehensive strategies that include social media, websites, radio, streaming, billboards, and more to bring attention to problem gambling, particularly among priority populations.

Vendor: Argus

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Created the [Let's Get Real About Gambling video](#), showcasing OPGS' public health approach to problem gambling and the community-first approach to programming.
- Expanded priority population campaigns to reach college students, an audience increasingly at-risk for problem gambling due to the legalization of sports wagering and targeted advertising. The campaign had over 11 million impressions in its first run.
- Expanded the Holiday Lottery campaign to include Portuguese and Haitian Creole. The campaign's goal was to discourage gifting lottery tickets to minor children and had over 15 million impressions.
- Redesigned and launched the Youth & Parents Toolkit, an interactive website which helps facilitate conversations between parents, caregivers, and their children about the risks of gambling. The toolkit is available at mcoepgp.org/lets-talk-risk.

150+ million
Impressions across all campaigns



Kiosk animation frames from the College Students campaign.

Treatment

Outpatient problem gambling treatment services are funded by third party reimbursement.

OPGS has developed a variety of comprehensive treatment support initiatives that includes the Problem Gambling Helpline, training and professional development opportunities for treatment providers, capacity-building efforts for community-based organizations, early detection and screening tools, and grants to build overall treatment capacity throughout the Commonwealth.



MA Technical Assistance Center on Problem Gambling Treatment

The Massachusetts Technical Assistance Center for Problem Gambling Treatment (M-TAC) provides free capacity-building, training, and technical assistance services for treatment and recovery programs and providers. M-TAC is guided by public health

principles, built on data and evidence, and centered on equity. M-TAC deeply understands the intersection of problem gambling and co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders and creates capacity-building strategies that are in alignment with such intersections.

Vendor: Health Resources in Action (HRiA)

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Hosted four statewide meetings for problem gambling treatment and recovery organizations with a diverse group of attendees including clinical providers, recovery coaches, and community partners. The statewide meetings are intended to be a space for sharing learnings, providing best practices, and increasing awareness of the resources available through M-TAC.
- Attended each of the DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) regional provider meetings, which are held in six regions of the state. The meetings ensure providers are aware of M-TAC and understand the tools and resources available to them, provide an overview of problem gambling treatment services, and offer support to those seeking the [Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certification](#).
- Added additional training modules such as sports betting and financial literacy to the M-TAC calendar, which provided continuing education credits towards the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate.
- M-TAC’s clinical consultant team trained and educated 12 outpatient providers about the intersection of harm reduction and problem gambling, resulting in increased understanding and capacity within their organizations.



MA Technical Assistance Center on Problem Gambling Treatment

3,050

individuals screened during Gambling Disorder Screening Days, 600 of which had a positive screen and received a referral

413

individuals participated in 11 trainings held for outpatient treatment agencies

156

individuals enrolled in 24 self-paced online courses

11

new Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist certificates approved and 7 certificate renewals processed

17

trainings held with a total of 368 participants

“I’m so excited to host an event on Gambling Disorder Screening Day in my town, which will be in coordination with the work my nonprofit is doing to enhance awareness.”

- M-TAC training participant

“I work in [the substance use disorder field] and have clients with co-occurring gambling disorders. I was looking to find out how I can best address both!”

- M-TAC training participant

Project Build Up

Project Build Up (PBU) is designed to strengthen the capacity of the workforce in outpatient substance use and gambling treatment agencies to provide and promote gambling treatment services, with an

emphasis on addressing the disproportionate impact of problem gambling on communities of color and those at greater risk.

Vendor: Health Resources in Action (HRiA)

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Provided grant funding to outpatient substance use and gambling treatment agencies to support workforce development, staff recruitment and retention, and/or marketing strategies to support and promote problem gambling treatment.
- Eight organizations across Massachusetts received PBU grant funding, including four outpatient organizations and four community-based organizations. The organizations included North Suffolk Community Services, Bay State Community Services, Lowell House, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Manos Unidas, Maggie Sadoway Immigrant Cooperative, Roots and Dreams and Mustard Seeds, and Casa Multicultural.
- Provided technical assistance to grantees to support and promote problem gambling treatment, including offering a series of office hours on several problem gambling-related topics such as marketing and promotion of problem gambling-related services and clinical topics relevant to supporting clients who experience problem gambling.
- Hosted the PBU Learning Academy, a two-session program focusing on addressing problem gambling in a special population or topic. The Learning Academies hosted were: Exploring Problem Gambling in Sober Housing Environments, Promoting Sports Betting Awareness in Treating Problem Gambling, and Exploring Problem Gambling and Stigma.
- Developed the Lived Experience Workgroup, which brings together providers, survivors, and allies to share challenges and triumphs and inform PBU's future problem gambling treatment work.

Project Build Up

50

individuals participated in the PBU Learning Academy

8

organizations received \$93,385 in PBU grant funding for workforce development activities

“Hearing from someone with lived experience was helpful to have that insight...”

- Participant

“I always like to hear about lived experience. It gives me an idea of how to address these issues with my clients.”

- Participant

“I liked [hearing] the lived experiences of the people who spoke. It makes learning more effective – to hear how people with a gambling disorder struggle and cope or overcome a gambling addiction.”

- Learning Academy Participant

“It was one of the most supportive grants we’ve experienced. This means a lot to a grassroots organization with many volunteer feet on the ground every day, caring for our community.”

- Participant

Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline

In July 2020, OPGS integrated the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline with the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Helpline to better serve people experiencing problem gambling related issues in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The overall goal was to improve the consumer experience for those seeking treatment and support, increase reach, and achieve greater efficiency and alignment — all while access to gambling expands in Massachusetts. The Helpline serves as the key safety net and central hub

for problem gambling education; information; treatment referrals; and support for individuals, families, and the professional community.

If you or a loved one is seeking help with problem gambling, call 1-800-327-5050 or text: “GAMB” to 800327 or visit <https://gamblinghelplinema.org/> to speak with a trained Specialist. Specialists are available 24/7 and services are free, confidential, and available in multiple languages.

Vendor: Health Resources in Action (HRiA)

FY24 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Continued integration of the SUD Helpline and the Problem Gambling Helpline to screen all calls to the SUD Helpline for gambling concerns, which allows callers to get support without delay.
- Continued to collaborate with M-TAC and Project Build Up 2.0 to ensure the MA Problem Gambling Helpline staff and website has the most up to date information for organizations offering problem gambling treatment services.
- Offered support via chats on the Problem Gambling Helpline website and the SUD Helpline website.
- Expanded treatment options by adding more private practice counselors and integrating additional resources for peer support.

3,300

calls received by the Problem Gambling Helpline

140k

unique visitors to the Problem Gambling Helpline website

900

successful text and chat interactions conducted

“I just wanted to say thank you to [calltaker]. He – you know – walked me through very calmly the options that I have for my 18 year old son. He seems to have a gambling problem so I appreciate that. I will try it, and I have good information now. So, thank you very much.”

- Problem Gambling Helpline caller

Looking Ahead to FY25

The Office of Problem Gambling Services and its partners celebrate all the accomplishments achieved together in FY24. In FY25, OPGS continues leading the public health response to problem gambling by prioritizing prevention, treatment, and data to develop and launch new initiatives that directly address the harms associated with gambling.

FY25 GOALS INCLUDE:

- Expanding the Let's Get Real About Gambling platform to new priority populations, including young men ages 20-29 and youth. The platform uses diverse media to increase awareness of problem gambling and to provide residents with the resources needed to access help.
- Enhancing the problem gambling data and surveillance system, guided by the Office's Data to Action Framework, which provides the infrastructure for all data, surveillance, and evaluation activities.
- Increasing investment in treatment support services, including the expansion of the Project Build Up initiative, which will grant \$1,000,000 to treatment providers over two years for training, capacity building, and workforce development.
- Expanding the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist (MA PGS) certification program by introducing a new, non-clinical track to elevate the work of professionals in the substance use, mental health, and recovery field who are seeking knowledge and training around problem gambling and related issues.
- Launching the Community Connections initiative, which will grant \$2,500,000 to local health departments with the goal of increasing education and awareness about problem gambling. These local health departments will conduct a host of community engagement efforts to mitigate harms and promote resources for problem gambling, including treatment information.



**Office of Problem
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250 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108

For more information,
visit [mass.gov/opgs](https://www.mass.gov/opgs)