Most Americans do not realize that there is not a single dollar in the Federal health budget dedicated to problem gambling services. Although problem gambling is a critical national public health issue, Federal health agencies have been resistant to requests to address gambling problems because there is no funding authorization.

The Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPG) of 2009 would change that. The legislation, which is co-sponsored by Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank, amends the Public Health Service Act to designate the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as the lead Federal agency on problem gambling issues and provides grants to state health agencies, tribes, universities and non-profits for the prevention, treatment and research of problem gambling.

CPG is designed to fill this gap by providing $14.2 million per year over the next five years—the total appropriation of $71 million is less than ¼ of 1% of the estimated $5.3 billion in FY06 Federal revenue from taxes on gambling winnings. This new appropriation ensures that current funding levels for substance abuse and mental health are unaffected.

The act focuses on integrating problem gambling services into the Federal health agencies and supporting existing state-based programs to help problem gamblers and their families. These bills do not expand, restrict or tax gambling.

Model comprehensive problem gambling services include significant prevention, intervention, treatment, and research activities along with products, programs and processes. They include:

- Prevention of problem gambling is essential and includes strategies to target vulnerable, high-risk groups.
- Intervention for problem gamblers so that they do not develop further problems and are enabled to return to problem-free gambling or not gambling.
- Treatment for those with severe gambling problems, services similar to those found in substance abuse treatment programs.
- Research to explore the public health consequences of gambling through ongoing surveillance and evaluation.
- It is important to remember that it was only 40 years ago when public attitude began to change in regard to drug abuse. Former President Nixon’s administration abandoned demands for a crackdown on drug users and focused on an enlightened approach, which recognized that the best response to drug abuse was more often education and treatment than punishment. These ideas were then backed with appropriate funding. Today, funding for prevention, treatment and research on substance use disorders is commonsense and common practice.

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling believes that prevention, treatment and research for problem gambling needs to be viewed with the same practicality. Passing the CPC legislation will be a tremendous step in furthering this goal, and removing the stigma associated with problem gambling, therefore providing more people with access to problem gambling programs and services.

“A different world cannot be built by indifferent people”

-Peter Marshall

Contact your Congressional leaders and ask for their support of the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPG) of 2009:

- Requests from constituents and/or state residents have the greatest impact on members of Congress.
- Passage of this initial legislation will establish federal policy and funding for programs and services to address problem gambling.
- Accomplishing this goal will assist all of us in our local efforts to minimize the impact of problem gambling in our communities.

For more information visit: www.ncpgambling.org/advocacy

The Mass. Council constantly works to improve access to its services and make it easier for people to get help who would rather not make a traditional phone call to the Helpline. To that effect, we are very happy to announce that on October 1, 2009, we will launch a live chat feature on our website www.masscompulsivegambling.org. This will allow people to “chat,” or email back and forth with a Helpline Specialist in a dialog box in real time, while still maintaining the same level of compassion and confidentiality offered in the traditional way. According to Helpline Specialist, Bruce Tassone, “We’re exploring non-conventional ways to reach out to people; pertinent ways to help people where they are.” Helpline Specialists will be available to chat Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
COUNCIL SHARES STRATEGIES For Minimizing Harm of Expanded Gambling

On June 23, 2009 the Council held a forum at the State House to urge legislators to invest in a comprehensive public health plan to combat problem gambling including prevention, intervention, treatment, research and cross systems services. The event was sponsored by State Representative Elizabeth Malia, D-Jamaica Plain and State Senator Jennifer Flanagan, D-Leominster.

The Council proposed that if Massachusetts policy makers enter into an expansion of gambling availability, they should carefully acknowledge that putting responsible gambling policies and practices in place at the outset is essential for mitigating the negative impact of expanded gambling on Massachusetts’ residents.

“We know that when gambling is made more widely available and is closer in proximity, the number of individuals and families who experience problems with gambling grows,” said Kathleen M. Scanlan, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. “If the state decides to introduce casinos or slots parlors, then it must also invest in a comprehensive public health plan to combat problem gambling including prevention, intervention, treatment, research and cross systems services.”

For the past several years, the Council has been researching the best practices of other states in regards to problem gambling. The Council has developed policy guidelines for the development of responsible state supported gambling, and shared several of the recommendations at the event.

There is no more crucial time to make gambling awareness and gambling and its attendant social and fiscal costs, said State Representative Elizabeth Malia, D-Jamaica Plain.

“For the vast majority of the population, lottery games are fun and affordable forms of entertainment. But for some, gambling can lead to problems,” said Treasurer Timothy Cahill. “The Lottery is proud to support the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling and its vital services, which not only assist problem gamblers but also their families and loved ones.”

Scanlan said the Patrick Administration, Treasurer Cahill and legislators have been supportive of ensuring that resources are available to deal with additional compulsive gambling issues. She said the governor’s legislation on expanded gambling two years ago set aside 2.5 percent of gross revenues from expanded gambling to be used for prevention, intervention and treatment.

That number, Scanlan said would put the state in the forefront when it comes to providing comprehensive compulsive gambling services. In a recent national survey of funding for problem gambling services in the United States, Massachusetts ranked 19th in per capita expenditures to address problem gambling. Among the steps being recommended by the Council should gambling be expanded are:

- Employee training at gambling facilities to enable the recognition and referral of gamblers with problems
- Creation of educational materials and programs for at-risk youth in areas near likely casino or slot parlor locations
- Educational materials at gambling facilities along with signage directing gamblers with problems to the help line
- Creation of a statewide self-exclusion list giving compulsive gamblers the choice to be barred from any gambling facilities
- Provide a residential treatment facility for crisis stabilization in this state – something now lacking.

“We support gambling here in the Commonwealth, as evidenced by the Lottery. But similar problems to those we are facing in other states are always a concern. We want to be prepared to address those issues,” said State Senator Jennifer Flanagan, D-Leomington.

On June 23, 2009 the Council held a forum at the State House to urge legislators to invest in a comprehensive public health plan to combat problem gambling including prevention, intervention, treatment, research and cross systems services. The event was sponsored by State Representative Elizabeth Malia, D-Jamaica Plain and State Senator Jennifer Flanagan, D-Leominster.

The Council proposed that if Massachusetts policy makers enter into an expansion of gambling availability, they should carefully acknowledge that putting responsible gambling policies and practices in place at the outset is essential for mitigating the negative impact of expanded gambling on Massachusetts’ residents.

“We know that when gambling is made more widely available and is closer in proximity, the number of individuals and families who experience problems with gambling grows,” said Kathleen M. Scanlan, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. “If the state decides to introduce casinos or slots parlors, then it must also invest in a comprehensive public health plan to combat problem gambling including prevention, intervention, treatment, research and cross systems services.”

For the past several years, the Council has been researching the best practices of other states in regards to problem gambling. The Council has developed policy guidelines for the development of responsible state supported gambling, and shared several of the recommendations at the event.

There is no more crucial time to make gambling awareness and gambling and its attendant social and fiscal costs, said State Representative Elizabeth Malia, D-Jamaica Plain.

“For the vast majority of the population, lottery games are fun and affordable forms of entertainment. But for some, gambling can lead to problems,” said Treasurer Timothy Cahill. “The Lottery is proud to support the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling and its vital services, which not only assist problem gamblers but also their families and loved ones.”

Scanlan said the Patrick Administration, Treasurer Cahill and legislators have been supportive of ensuring that resources are available to deal with additional compulsive gambling issues. She said the governor’s legislation on expanded gambling two years ago set aside 2.5 percent of gross revenues from expanded gambling to be used for prevention, intervention and treatment.

That number, Scanlan said would put the state in the forefront when it comes to providing comprehensive compulsive gambling services. In a recent national survey of funding for problem gambling services in the United States, Massachusetts ranked 19th in per capita expenditures to address problem gambling. Among the steps being recommended by the Council should gambling be expanded are:

- Employee training at gambling facilities to enable the recognition and referral of gamblers with problems
- Creation of educational materials and programs for at-risk youth in areas near likely casino or slot parlor locations
- Educational materials at gambling facilities along with signage directing gamblers with problems to the help line
- Creation of a statewide self-exclusion list giving compulsive gamblers the choice to be barred from any gambling facilities
- Provide a residential treatment facility for crisis stabilization in this state – something now lacking.

“We support gambling here in the Commonwealth, as evidenced by the Lottery. But similar problems to those we are facing in other states are always a concern. We want to be prepared to address those issues,” said State Senator Jennifer Flanagan, D-Leomington.

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is pleased to announce that staff members, Jim Wuelfing and Ryan J. Martin, have received awards from the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG).

Prevention Director, Jim Wuelfing has been awarded the National Council on Problem Gambling’s (NCPG) first “Prevention Award.” A dedicated member of the prevention field for the majority of his professional career, Jim has directed his knowledge and expertise specifically to problem gambling prevention for nearly 15 years.

An excellent presenter, trainer and facilitator, Jim has developed and strengthened effective prevention of problem gambling programming not only at the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, but across the country. He has maintained a strong emphasis on outreach to high risk groups and undervalued populations and has built networks with other prevention providers that help to advance the prevention of problem gambling. Under his direction, effecter multi-focus outreach efforts are underway in the Commonwealth.

Jim advocates consistently for the inclusion of prevention in the full continuum of problem gambling services, both on the state and federal levels. He can be counted on to regularly stress “model programs” and he advocates for agencies and organizations to apply research and strategies effective for substance use disorders and think about those same concepts in regards to problem gambling. In addition, he works to build the capacity of the existing prevention infrastructure, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and educational institutions to address problem gambling.

Ryan J. Martin, PhD, Thomas N. Cummings Postdoctoral Research Fellow, was awarded the National Council on Problem Gambling’s (NCPG) 2009 Dissertation Award. The annual award was established by the NCPG in 1999 to acknowledge superior research efforts among young scholars in the field. Dr. Martin presented his dissertation findings at the 23rd National Conference on Problem Gambling, which took place June 25-27 in Indianapolis, IN. His dissertation entitled “An Examination of Gambling Behavior Among College Students Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)” was completed as part of the doctoral program in Health Education and Promotion at the University of Alabama. It examined the role of the theory of planned behavior (TPB; i.e., intentions, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes) in predicting gambling frequency among college student gamblers.

Findings suggest that college problem gambling prevention efforts focused toward non-problem gamblers should target misperceptions of approval regarding gambling behavior (i.e., subjective norms), personal approval of gambling behavior (i.e., attitudes), and perceived behavioral control to better manage gambling behavior in various situations. Those working to reduce gambling among college students experiencing gambling problems may consider exploring these alternative approaches.

For more information about Dr. Martin’s research findings, please contact him at 617-426-4554/ryan@masscompulsivegambling.org.
The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit health agency dedicated to reducing the social, financial and emotional costs of problem gambling. The Council provides prevention, information, education, advocacy, and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones, and the greater community.

The Council is funded in part by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services.

Massachusetts Problem Gambling Treatment Centers

Boston ASAP, Boston: 617.482.5292
Community Care Services, Attleboro MA: 508-226-1660, ext. 213
Henry Lee Willis Community Center, Worcester: 508.799.2934
Lowell House, Inc., Lowell: 978.459.8656
Mt. Auburn Hospital Prevention & Recovery Center, Cambridge: 617.499.5051
Stanley Street Treatment & Resources, Inc., Fall River: 508.679.5222
Steppingstone, Inc., Fall River: 508.674.2788 ext. 120
Team Coordinating Agency, Inc., Haverhill: 978.373.1181 ext. 42

Resources

Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling Helpline: 800.426.1234
Gamblers Anonymous MA Hotline: 617.338.6020
Bettors Anonymous: 978.988.1777 or 781.662.5199
Gam-Anon (family/friends): 888.644.8482
National Council on Problem Gambling Helpline: 800.522.4700
Division on Addictions, Cambridge Health Alliance, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School: 781.306.8600

WANTED!
Your e-mail Address

In an effort to reduce paper waste, as well as conserve financial resources in challenging economic times, the Council has begun to send out more of its newsletters and other information via e-mail. If you are not receiving e-newsletters from the Council, please sign up today. It’s easy! Simply visit www.masscompulsivegambling.org/news/newsletters.php and type in your name and e-mail address.

COUNCIL Seeks Speakers

The Council is seeking people in recovery, and family members alike, from all areas of the state, to share their personal experiences with problem gambling. In order to further our mission, the Council would like people who are willing to speak to media and/or groups to raise public awareness about how problem gambling impacts lives. If you are interested in participating, please contact Program Director, Marlene Warner, at the Council at 617-426-4554/marlene@masscompulsivegambling.org or Mac M., PR Chair, Gamblers Anonymous at 617-721-5351/ macgapr@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendars!

THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH’S 2009 OUNCE OF PREVENTION CONFERENCE
Facing the Future: Healthy People, Places and Policies
Tuesday, October 6, 2009 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel & Trade Center in Marlborough
For further information on this conference, please contact AdCare Educational Institute at 508-752-7313.