Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, nonprofit health agency dedicated to providing leadership to reduce the social, financial, and emotional costs of problem gambling, and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including information and public awareness, community education and professional training, advocacy, and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones, and the greater community.

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

J O I N  T H E  C O U N C I L  O N L I N E !

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FISCAL YEAR 2013 JULY 1, 2012 - JUNE 30, 2013

Prevention
Education & Training
Information & Public Awareness
Referral
Advocacy
According to Keith Whylie, Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gambling, “Massachusetts is a leader in sharing their excellent local programs to help inform national initiatives, and in taking national concepts and turning them into successful state activities. MCCG’s active participation in NCPIG committees facilitates this information exchange and strengthens our strong grassroots infrastructure.”

Staff members at the Mass. Council are highly regarded, not only in the Commonwealth, but nationally as well. Executive Director, Marlene Warner; Program Specialist, Jodie Neally; and Communications Director, Margot Cahoon have all participated in and/or led National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) committees over the past year.

Nan Henrie, Chair of the Membership Committee said, “It has been a pleasure to work with Marlene on the Membership Committee. Her participation has greatly expanded the depth of knowledge and expertise of the Committee. She is committed to the success of the Committee’s goals and was instrumental in the development of the testimonial project.”

Through Margot’s leadership as Chair of the Social Media Committee, the group planned an event for the annual conference in Seattle. More than 40 people attended the workshop, which included social media basics for beginners, like how to set up a Twitter account, to more advanced conversation about the development of social media policies.

The National agenda has also served the Commonwealth. Jodie said that because of her participation on the Helpline Committee, and through the relationships that she has developed with colleagues on the calls, that she has learned a lot about best practices and has been able to implement some important changes in Massachusetts, including telephone recovery support and more frequent consumer satisfaction surveying.

Joanne asked, “Today, I can sit and be happy with where my life is at. I have to remind myself to remember to be grateful though, because life still keeps coming. There are always going to be ups and downs. I’ve now learned how to not make those downs any worse and how to remind myself that, you know, I could have gone to jail.” – Justin O.

“Nobody will refuse you help. The only requirement is that you have to have made up your mind that you want to quit your addiction. So, my advice is … give someone a call, they’ll help you, and get help quick, because when you look back and you see that your family is no longer and that the only thing that you have in your life that’s viable to you is your addiction. So, my advice is … give someone a call, they’ll help you, and get help quick, because when you look...” – Chad

According to one participant, “The staff were so helpful, warm, welcoming. There is so much to learn and the information was provided in a simple, direct manner so as not to be overwhelming.”

All of the participants, along with their support persons, were offered the opportunity to take part in clinical consultations aimed at connecting individuals to recovery resources. Gambling-Free Weekend allowed the Council to provide recovery awareness and direct support to people struggling with problem gambling and their families.

The retreat was a wonderful adventure for people seeking recovery support for individuals and their family members. We look forward to next year in our continuous effort to support people in recovery from gambling disorders.

“Today, I enjoyed having the time and space to process my emotions—including hurt, loss, change, confusion, and fear. I feel I have a start now to move forward. I felt stuck before this weekend.” – Mary

Friday, March 8 through Sunday, March 10, 2013, we hosted our second annual Your First Step to Change: a Gambling-Free Weekend Retreat at the International Resort in Bolton, Mass.

The retreat provided support to individuals who were struggling with early problem gambling recovery. Each of the 10 participants was accompanied by a support person throughout the course of the weekend. The program featured workshops, meetings and activities aimed at introducing, addressing and encouraging recovery from problematic gambling.

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“Thank you so much. Words can’t describe how I feel. I’m grateful for this opportunity! ‘One day at a time’ are words to live by.” – Chad

NEW SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE
Helping People in Recovery to Further Their Educations

Nick Irvine helped people affected by gambling problems by volunteering with the Mass. Council from 1992 through 2008. During that time, he spoke with over 1,000 callers to the Council helpline, offering them hope and help. While Nick spoke from his own experience with recovery from a gambling problem, he was quick to tell callers that he didn’t have all the answers… but that he knew what worked for him.

Nick’s memory was honored through the dedication and opening of The Nick Irvine Resource and Recovery Room at our office and the development of a scholarship fund in his name. His family was touched to celebrate his legacy in this way and participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Nick Irvine scholarship will help give a new start to those in need – getting people back on their feet and furthering their educations. The fund is available to people in recovery interested in earning their GED, or those beginning new careers at community colleges.
With casinos coming to Massachusetts, gambling addiction has quickly become a hot topic in the Commonwealth. While the Council has been advocating for those impacted by the disorder for 30 years, our knowledge and experience has never been in as much demand as it is right now.

Over the past fiscal year, we have been working closely with the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC), members of the Massachusetts Partnership for Responsible Gambling (MPRG) and with our Recovery Advisory Board.

By having an official seat at the table, the Mass. Council is able to share our concerns and influence change for people experiencing problems with gambling and their loved ones.

In May, stakeholders came together to build a “Common Agenda: a short-term plan for problem gambling services in the Commonwealth.” The meeting, held in Waltham, focused on problem gambling services in the state and on determining the work ahead, including who will complete that work, and how success will be measured.

In April, we thanked members of the Massachusetts Partnership for Responsible Gambling (MPRG) at our annual conference: The alliance of gambling industry leaders, regulators, and problem gambling experts are committed to implementing responsible gambling industry policies and practices, as well as promoting public awareness and encouraging programs for prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery of problem gambling. Members include: Mohegan Sun Massachusetts, the Massachusetts State Lottery, MGM Resorts and Casino, Suffolk Downs, Plainridge Racecourse, and ourselves.

According to Domenic Longobardi of Plainridge Racecourse, “This is a very serious issue, and the industry needs to be the driving force behind making sure all of the facilities in Massachusetts are the model for the country in terms of safe and responsible gambling. I feel the MPRG is a great foundation for everyone involved to work together to achieve that goal. We must educate and train our staff and customers for a long and successful future in responsible gambling.”

Our relationship with the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) has been equally important in influencing how the Commonwealth views and addresses problem gambling. According to Commission Chairman, Stephen P. Crosby, “From almost the moment the Massachusetts Gaming Commission first convened, we have relied on the expertise and spirit of collaboration that the Mass Council has provided for our critical work in the area of problem gambling. The Council sponsored an all-day educational forum for the Commissioners, and Director Warner not only has served on multiple advisory groups but was instrumental in identifying and helping us successfully hire our Director of Research and Problem Gambling, Mark Vander Linden. We look forward to working with the Council to keep the impact of expanded gaming in Massachusetts on problem gambling to the barest possible minimum.”

In FY13, The Massachusetts State Lottery reached out to the Council to schedule trainings for sales force representatives at each of its five regional offices in Braintree, Springfield, Woburn, New Bedford and Worcester.

The Lottery’s goal was to support their statewide network of retail agents by training them to better understand problem gambling, and to generate awareness on resources available for help. According to Paul Sternburg, Executive Director of the Lottery, “Responsible play is an important issue to the Lottery. While we want our customers to enjoy playing lottery games, we want them to play within their means and in moderation. We will continue to work with the Council on efforts to promote responsible gambling practices to minimize the potential adverse effects of gambling.”

Nearly one hundred sales representatives were in attendance at the 2-hour trainings. They reported feeling supported by the Council and feeling confident that they now possess the knowledge to address and help a patron exhibiting signs of problem gambling.

NEARLY 100 LOTTERY SALES REPRESENTATIVES TRAINED TO PROMOTE SAFER GAMBLING & HELP PATRONS WITH SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

In June, the Council hosted two free research luncheons for clinicians, and anyone else who was interested in recent problem gambling research. The purpose of the events was to expose attendees to researchers in the problem gambling field.

The first luncheon featured Dr. Geoffrey Locke, PhD. Attendees in the western part of the State, had the opportunity to hear Dr. Locke speak about Interpersonal Guilt and Pathological Gambling Amongst College Students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Dr. Locke talked about how interpersonal guilt is an emotion that helps maintain relationships. He also talked about when this emotion becomes excessive, it can become irrational and that it has been associated with many different types of mental health and substance disorders.

His lecture discussed findings of a study he conducted with a group of college students about their feelings of interpersonal guilt and pathological gambling.

The second luncheon, held in Cambridge, featured Dr. Natasha Schull at Mount Auburn Hospital. Schull is a cultural anthropologist and associate professor at MIT’s Program in Science, Technology, and Society. Her current research concerns the rise of digital self-tracking technologies. At the event, she discussed her new book Addictive by Design. She provided information gleaned from people working in casinos, their vendors and game designers that painted a fascinating picture about the gambling industry.
Dozens of Newly Trained Clinicians Equipped to Help People Experiencing Problems with Gambling in Western Mass, Regional Meetings also Expand Resources Available

It can be difficult to find a clinician to treat someone experiencing problems with gambling and their loved ones. That’s why the Mass. Council works to expand the number of clinicians who are specifically trained to provide this service across the Commonwealth. Our recent efforts focused in Western Massachusetts.

This relationship with the Holyoke community is especially important because Holyoke Community College is currently preparing individuals for casino-related jobs. The Council is committed to working with casino operators to provide training and support around responsible gambling policies and practices.

Treatment is not the only area in which we built capacity in Western Massachusetts in FY13. Several events were held to engage populations in problem gambling prevention. The Mass. Council facilitated Regional Prevention of Problem Gambling Collaborative meetings for colleges and high schools, as well as trainings for college staff members and resident assistants, and a Creative Activities for Probability and Statistics (CAPS) training in Granby. Materials have been distributed to the Recovery High School in Springfield and the Recover Project in Greenfield.

Holyoke Community College has hosted a regional Recovery Coach training on their premises.

According to Chandler, “We’re very excited to be able to offer treatment for disordered gambling at Holyoke Medical Center. The Council’s support, guidance and resources have been invaluable.”

On June 1, we held The 2012 Massachusetts Problem Gambling Symposium: Raising Awareness & Building Treatment Capacity in Western Massachusetts at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst campus. The Symposium served as the kickoff to increased work in the region during Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13).

Over the course of the year, we offered two clinical trainings and two of our 12 regional collaborative meetings, the goal of which are to establish a regional trainings and two of our 12 regional collaborative meetings, the goal of which are to establish a regional activity to engage populations across the Commonwealth.

The Council is committed to working with casino operators to provide training and support around responsible gambling policies and practices.

Cumulative Donations: 27%

MPRG 5.90%

Offset Revenues and Fees 1.45%

TOTAL NET ASSETS $103,620

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS $213,834


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