Let’s be real: Addiction makes millipedes of us all. As soon as we brave a first step toward recovery, we look behind and realize we’ve got countless other feet that have yet to join the march. My partner is in recovery from compulsive gambling, and I have my own struggles with eating disorders—so we both know it can take many, many “first steps” to feel that one has actually arrived at the starting point.

In a sense, my partner was well past Point One in the spring of 2014 when we found out about the Mass. Council’s “First Step to Change” retreat; in fact, he received a retreat flier in the recovery group he’d been attending regularly for months. But I do view that May’s retreat was a huge first step in his recovery, because it was the first step we really took together. The genius of this retreat is that it’s not just for people seeking recovery from their own gambling addiction; it’s for those of us who love them, want to support them, and need to pursue our own related forms of recovery.

At our retreat, the eight participants with gambling issues were joined by a roughly equal number of spouses, siblings, and friends. We were there because of an agonizing, aggressive affliction, one that had wreaked significant havoc in all of our relationships. But thanks to the tone set by the workshop leaders, the air fairly vibrated with mutual caring, respect and hope. Yes, hope: something that, at least back then, was hard to find in a Google search of “compulsive gambling.”

What did we get besides hope? Well, we enjoyed—for free of charge—36 hours of luxury accommodations and sumptuous, plentiful food on the grounds of a scenic rural golf course. For people wrestling with financial catastrophe, self-hatred and shame, those gifts alone were priceless. My partner and I also realized what a luxury it was to have both of us being taken care of—and to have a weekend that wasn’t haunted by the double threats of his surreptitious gambling and my surreptitious “detective work.”

For me, though, the retreat’s workshops were the greatest luxury. “Problem gamblers” and “supporters” (sometimes in separate groups, sometimes together) took part in a variety of exercises and discussions designed to clarify our goals and values, give us tools to handle harmful impulses, develop strategies for self-care, and foster mutual understanding. We learned that there are many paths to recovery—a relief for my partner and me, since the 12-step model of Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon hadn’t felt like a good fit for either of us. In the course of the weekend, as the bond among all participants grew, we saw ourselves less as “addicts” and “enablers” and more as loving people united in a common quest for health.

At the end, we left with fresh perspectives and coping strategies; new, nourishing friendships; a bag full of insightful books; and fistfuls of fortifying snacks for the drive home. Those Mass. Council folks thought of everything! And to top it off—because addiction makes millipedes of us, and there may be countless “next shoes to drop” even after recovery begins—we were given the option of three months’ weekly check-in calls from retreat staff. During rough post-retreat patches, I was comforted just to see my Council contact’s number in my call log; even when we didn’t connect, I was reminded that hope existed beyond that one idyllic weekend. In fact, more than a year later, most of what we got at the retreat—hope, recovery tools, friendships… everything but the plush beds and five-star food, really—is still ours to keep.

Sometimes you need a retreat in order to advance. I hope that many, many more people will have the chance to deepen their recovery through the Mass. Council’s “First Step to Change” retreat.

Each year we host approx. 20 couples for the weekend retreat. It is due to the generosity of our hotel, which continues to provide us with low guest rates, and donors like you that help us run events like this. So THANK YOU for changing lives and providing hope and connection to those in recovery and those still struggling with their gambling.

Are you able to sponsor a person in recovery for gambling disorder so they can participate in this life-changing weekend retreat? It costs $2,500 to house each recovery team and provide trainers for the weekend. Donations of all sizes can help to offset the costs associated with this moving weekend experience.

Please be sure to designate “weekend retreat” on your checks and send them to Mass. Council on Compulsive Gambling attn: Development Office, 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110 or make a secure donation on our website.

Are you interested in applying to join this year’s Weekend Retreat? Please contact our Intervention and Recovery Support Coordinator, Jodie Nealley at jodie@masscompulsivegambling.org or 617-426-4554.
Please join us at our upcoming Conference on Gambling Problems on Thursday, April 14 and Friday, April 15, 2016 on the beautiful grounds of the Four Points by Sheraton Norwood Hotel.

- Learn about Gambling Courts and the legal ramifications of gambling disorder from the originator of the gambling court model, Honorable Judge Mark Farrell.
- Discover new takeaways from the Opioid Crisis in Massachusetts and across the nation that can be applied to living with a gambler from Dr. Martha Kane.
- What is GameSense, how did Massachusetts adopt the first US model from British Columbia, and how does the brand help introduce responsible gambling practices on-site at the casino? Attend a conference workshop to hear from Paul Smith, the creator of the GameSense Brand, and joined by our GameSense Advisors, as they discuss the early pitfalls of implementation and the evolution of interactions with casino guests almost one year after the opening of Plainridge Park Casino.
- Dr. Lance Dodes has written three books describing revolutionary advances in understanding how addictions work and will explain why he believes 12-step programs are ineffective.
- Dr. Rory Reid will walk us through the UCLA Family Treatment Model for clinicians and explain how to create an effective treatment plan to develop and maintain healthy boundaries, introduce communication strategies, and self-care methods for the partner/family members of problem gamblers.
- Dr. Loreen Rugle will discuss the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) approach as well as provide attendees with sound clinical treatment techniques.

Check our website regularly for an updated list of speakers and workshops.

We are honored to have these leaders in their fields, and many others not listed here, present on three different tracks: emerging technology, trends in expanded gambling, and the community and family perspective. Each track will provide tools and viewpoints so that participants return to their work with fresh ideas and tangible solutions for change.

Workshops will include trending topics such as daily fantasy sports, play management and other responsible gambling and mindfulness tools, SBIRT and treatment modalities for clinicians, legal ramifications of addiction and its’ effect on the family, tribal gaming, a family panel and much more. Approximately 12 Clock Hours (CEUs) will be provided for both days of the conference.

Purchase your tickets today!
Conference registration is $225 which includes two-day attendance, continental breakfast, lunch, materials, and Continuing Education Clock Hours (NBCC ACEP No. 6331).

Members of the Mass. Council receive a $45 discount – only $180! Please contact Brianne Tolson at brianne@masscompulsivegambling.org for your member discount password or to learn more about becoming a member.

Do you have your MAPGS?
Receive a $25 discount – only $200! Please contact Jodie Nealley at Jodie@masscompulsivegambling.org for your

MAPGS discount password and to learn more about the MA Problem Gambling Specialist certificate process.

Special discounted room rates have been provided for our guests if you’d like to attend other after-hour events such as the appreciation dinner, please mention our conference when reserving your rooms. The cutoff date for room reservations is March 23rd.

Be sure to follow conference and speaker updates on our website and social media sites.

Would you like to become a conference sponsor?
Our invaluable sponsors help us to underwrite the cost of running our conference and the ability to provide scholarships to people in recovery who may otherwise be unable to afford attendance.

Platinum Level Sponsor $5,000
• Front row reserved table for 8 for both days of the conference
• Logo/name prominently displayed on all Conference promotional and program materials
• Signage at the Conference
• Prominent Inclusion on the Council website and social media pages
• Listed in all event press releases
• Listed in the Council’s post-event newsletter
• Exhibit table

Gold Level Sponsor $3,000
• Reserved table for 4 for both days of the conference
• Name displayed on all Conference promotional and program materials
• Signage at the Conference
• Inclusion on the Council website and social media pages
• Listed in all event press releases
• Listed in the Council’s post-event newsletter
• Exhibit table
Dear Supporters and Friends,

As we look forward to warmer, brighter mornings the gambling world continues to heat up. It seems you can't turn on your television or read a news article without hearing something about daily fantasy sports contests or expanded gambling nationwide. While the Mass. Council is neutral on the issue of legalized gambling, we have been very vocal about the need for responsible play, ways to make sure people are making informed decisions related to their gambling and improving access and quality of services for those struggling with a gambling disorder.

And so, we continue to advocate for more prevention, intervention, and treatment options so that everyone can easily access cost-effective health care and services across the state. We aren't there yet – but your interest and hard work helps us every step of the way!

Just this year local state-funded treatment centers increased to 42 locations across the state and we have over 150 MAPGS clinicians; this allows individuals to access quality care from trained clinicians across the Commonwealth.

By sharing your stories of recovery and continuing to build capacity statewide to change the course of this addiction we are proving that treatment and peer-recovery works. Advocacy is important. And your stories are vital. We are powerful as a combined group of advocates pressing this issue forward.

I ask you to join our social networks and share messages with your friends and family. Encourage others to believe in recovery – whatever pathway they may choose. Share our message with your legislators and health care officials. Listen to stories on our website from others who have struggled, their family members and their clinicians on our Wisdom Exchange podcast, or contact me to share your story.

Every message can change someone else's life. In the future we hope that health insurance companies cover all levels of care for gambling disorder without question. But we aren't there yet. We continue to reach out to legislators and health care representatives to spread this urgent message. But we need more help.

This is where you come in.

Supporters and advocates like you are so important to our mission of treating all people in their struggle to recovery with gambling disorder, as well as their friends and family. Every donation, call and volunteer hour that you share is an opportunity to help more folks in need.

So thank you for your active involvement. Our work isn’t done until everyone receives help and believes there is hope from this disorder.

Best regards,

Marlene Warner,
Executive Director

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**Silver Level Sponsor $1,000**
- Registration for 2 for both days of the conference
- Signage at the Conference
- Inclusion on the Council website and Facebook page
- Listed in the Council’s post-event newsletter
- Exhibit table

**Bronze Level Sponsor $500**
- Signage at the Conference
- Inclusion on the Council website and Facebook page
- Listed in the Council’s post-event newsletter
- Exhibit table

Want to make sure providers statewide know about you?

**Host a break out event or meal during the conference.** We are happy to provide naming and promotional opportunities. If you have questions regarding sponsorship, please contact Krystle Kelly at 617-426-4554 or Krystle@masscompulsivegambling.org.

**Host an Exhibit Table**

Provide resources and outreach to 200+ event participants during this educational two-day conference. Vendors may represent non-profits, for-profits or community organizations and are not required to have a direct relationship to gambling disorder. Rates are as follows:

- Exhibit table (business rate): $250
- Exhibit table (non-profit rate): $100

Please contact Jodie@masscompulsivegambling.org for more information or to host an exhibit table at the conference.

**SHARE your STORY!**

Stories have a way of bringing people together and reinforcing the idea that when people are going through a tough time they are not alone. Our Wisdom Exchange Program (WEP) is a collection of stories and personal experiences shared by people in recovery, family members of a problem gambler, and clinicians. The WEP provides a unique experience to listeners, giving them the opportunity to hear stories of recovery, triumph, success, challenges, and treatment.

A member of the Council staff will sit with you and record your story. Stories can be completely anonymous. If you’re uncomfortable doing an in person interview we can conduct a phone interview or you can even write your story down and mail it to us.

Anyone affected by problem gambling can share their story; if you are interested in sharing your story contact Krystle@masscompulsivegambling.org or call 617-426-4554.
The Gambling Brain: How it Works and How to Treat It

Date: April 25, 2016 - May 27, 2016
Location: Online through Middlesex Community College
Presenter: Jon Grant, JD, MD, MPH
Cost: $100 in-state; $200 out-of-state
Clock Hours: 18

This advanced-level online course will explain the role of biochemistry in the development of a gambling problem and in its treatment. It will discuss the cross priming effect of other addictions on gambling disorders. The course will also review how gambling problems are addressed with medications and/or psychotherapeutic treatment.

Online Course Prerequisites:
- Master’s degree in a mental health/addiction-related field or clinical experience with people with gambling problems.
- Consistent and reliable access to a computer connected to the Internet and with audio capabilities (speakers)—if the connection is from a work-related computer please check with MIS/IT team regarding connectivity to an interactive and secure site, including firewalls, spam blockers, etc.
- Requires Real Player and Adobe Acrobat software that can be downloaded for free from the course website.

Problem Gambling in the Asian Community

Date & Time: Friday, May 6, 2016; 10am to 4pm
Region: Boston/MetroWest/Central
Location: The Nonprofit Center – 89 South Street, Boston, MA 02111 (TBC)
Presenter: Tim Fong
Cost: $60 – Save 10% if you’re a member!
Clock Hours: 6

The Asian American community is comprised of diverse cultural groups with roots spanning many countries. Despite this diversity, there are some commonalities in this community including cultural values and attitudes towards gambling. Research has also shown that Asian Americans may be impacted by gambling disproportionately and may be at higher risk for gambling disorders. This workshop will explore the diverse cultural attitudes towards gambling, prevalence of gambling and preference for type of gambling, and specific risk factors. It will discuss prevention programs, intervention opportunities, effective treatment modalities, and cultural factors in working with a client with gambling disorder. Additionally it will explore how assimilation and acculturation affect gambling behavior and cultural attitudes as well as family dynamics.

Objectives:
- Participants will be able to discuss cultural attitudes and risk factors regarding gambling in the Asian American community
- Participants will be able to identify culturally competent prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for Asian American’s struggling with gambling disorder
- Participants will be able to discuss the impact of assimilation and acculturation on gambling behavior and attitudes towards treatment

Youth Gambling: Myths, Realities and New Understandings

Date & Time: May 18, 2016; 12pm to 1:30pm
Location: Online
Presenter: Jeffrey Derevensky, Ph.D.
Cost: $15
Clock Hours: 1.5

This workshop will discuss youth gambling behavior, risk factors, and prevention opportunities. It will examine myths associated with youth gambling and will look at new trends in youth gambling including social casino simulated gaming and fantasy sports wagering. Dr. Derevensky will also address how these new realities are shaping our understanding of youth gambling behavior and their implications for prevention, intervention, and treatment.


Do you follow us on social media?

Join us on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to stay up to date about trainings, current trends in gambling disorder, council activities, hear stories from people who have struggled and overcome their addiction, and more. Every time you like or share a post it gives someone an opportunity to learn about the Mass. Council, and provides access to our helpful resources. Please invite your friends, families, and colleagues to join our team and help more people support the Council and our mission to provide help and hope to people experiencing problems with their gambling. Thank you to all of our followers for your continued support. We could not be successful without you!

Like us: facebook.com/MACouncil
Follow us: @MassCouncilCG
Follow us: Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling
Attend 5 trainings and get free admission to our Annual Conference!

Are you interested in saving 10% on all trainings and events offered by the Council? Join our Membership Program today and get that and much more!

Why should you become a member?
When you join our membership program you instantly gain access to a number of benefits such as, networking opportunities, advocacy work with federal and state legislators and health agencies as well as a number of other things!

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

Individual Membership – $50
Individual members receive:
• Discount on events, trainings and meetings
• Quarterly newsletter
• Weekly Word email newsletter

Individual Dual Membership – $85
Individual dual members receive all benefits of the individual membership, plus:
• 1-year subscription to NCPG Newsletter
• 1-year bi-monthly subscription to Addiction Professional
• Full voting rights for NCPG
The cost of NCPG Individual Plus Membership alone is $100 when purchased directly. Save $40 through The Mass. Council!

Individual Dual Plus Membership – $110
Individual Dual Plus Members receive all benefits of the Individual Dual Membership, plus:
• 1-year subscription to International Gambling Studies

If you have any questions or comments please visit our website or contact Brianne@masscompulsivegambling.org.

Congratulations to our executive director, Marlene Warner on the Marvin A. Steinberg Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Problem and Disordered Gambling from the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling. Marlene was recognized with her award at the October 27th Conference on Gambling Problems at the Water’s Edge Resort and Spa in Westbrook, Connecticut.

You Help Us Create Change

The Council is so lucky to have fierce advocates and friends like Jim Spriggs. Earlier this summer our organizational funding line item was reduced by the Governor with no warning, which would have resulted in drastically reduced services and possibly reduced staffing. We immediately sprang into action and charged our social media followers to help us restore funding and maintain our services to people in need across the state. And your voices were heard! We regained our funding with the help of sincere legislators and supporters like you!
The annual conference is not just a chance to learn, it is also a chance to recognize those who have made an impact in gambling problems. After the first day of the conference comes to an end, we hope you will join us at the dinner to celebrate not only the honorees, but also the commitment you are making to problem gambling. We will be presenting the following awards: Thomas N. Cummings Leadership Award, Kathleen M. Scanlan Advocacy Awards, The Industry Award, The Media Award, The Trailblazer Award, and two new awards: The Treatment Award to recognize councilors and people working on gambling disorder recovery who promote wellness and education around gambling disorder as part of their regular practice, without whom our work would be that much more difficult, and the James K. Spriggs Award which will be presented to an individual in recovery from a gambling disorder who goes above and beyond to promote education and wellness in our community. Visit our website for full award descriptions or to purchase your $40 ticket to join us at the Appreciation Dinner.

Questions? Contact Development and Communications Manager, Eve Rabinowitz at Eve@masscompulsivegambling.org or 617-426-4554.

The preliminary evaluation of data from the SEIGMA study suggested that black men are disproportionately affected by gambling disorder as compared to other groups. This study also determined that 2.7% of adult Massachusetts residents currently have a gambling disorder and 7.5% are currently at-risk gamblers.

In the months following the start of the billboard campaign we have seen three times more activity on our website and an increase in phone calls to the helpline, both by concerned family members and people experiencing problems with their gambling.

Let us know if you’ve seen the billboards and if you found them effective. We would love to hear from you.

In an effort to increase public access to our resources, including visibility of the Mass. Council name and helpline, we decided to invest in a long-term advertising campaign in conjunction with funding from the Mass. Department of Public Health and ClearChannel Outdoors.

Beginning in July we were able to post 7 billboards across the state through April! Our intent was to shine a light on the issue of problem gambling to communities that may be disproportionately impacted by gambling disorder, as discussed in the SEIGMA study released in May. SEIGMA is the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts, a first of its kind U.S. baseline study of gambling habits in a state prior to the arrival of casino gaming administered by a team at UMass Amherst School of Public Health & Health Sciences.
With the passing of the legislation for legalized gaming facilities in Massachusetts, the Commonwealth adopted a responsible gambling brand from British Columbia called GameSense and implemented it within the required Responsible Gambling Information Center.

GameSense is the first program in the country that promotes responsible gambling in Massachusetts. This program allows for all people in Massachusetts casinos to learn more about the odds and myths about gambling and help them to make informed choices when they choose to gamble.

All casinos in the Commonwealth will have a GameSense Information Center, a place where people can go to speak with trained advisors and pick up information and resources on responsible gaming.

What is Voluntary Self-Exclusion?

Have you noticed an increase in your gambling or are concerned about visiting the casino too much? Voluntary Self-Exclusion may be a good option for you.

What is Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE)? The VSE program enables you to voluntarily exclude yourself from all Massachusetts gaming venues for your pre-determined length of time. Players can exclude themselves from the casino for a minimum of six months, one year, three years, five years, and lifetime. This can be a useful tool if you feel you need a break from gambling or if you recognize that casino gambling has become a problem.

During the period of your exclusion you will not be allowed to enter the gaming floor of any Massachusetts casino. To reduce the temptation to return to the casino, all reward points will be forfeited and marketing materials to you suspended. Persons who break the agreement and are found on the casino floor will be escorted from the gaming floor and forfeit any winnings. Once you’ve signed up, the information you provide will be given to all security offices in gaming venues throughout the Commonwealth to assist you in maintaining your agreement.

How do you self-exclude?

Participants can exclude themselves by making an appointment with the Massachusetts Gaming Commission at 617-533-9737 or The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling at 800-426-1234 (Both located in Boston). Potential participants can also visit the GameSense Center located at the Plainridge Park Casino. A GameSense Advisor or casino staff member will be on-site to help you at all times.

For more information about Voluntary Self-Exclusion or GameSense please visit the GameSense website at: www.gamesense.ma.com.
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

Southern New England Behavioral Health & Trauma Center, Attleboro: 508-226-1660 ext. 213
Boston ASAP, Boston: 617-482-5292
Gavin Foundation Center for Recovery Services, South Boston: 617-268-5000
Mt. Auburn Hospital Prevention & Recovery Center, Cambridge: 617-499-5051
North Suffolk Mental Health Services, Chelsea: 617-912-7578
Stanley Street Treatment & Resources, Inc., Fall River: 508-235-7020
Steppingstone, Inc. Outpatient Treatment Services, Fall River: 508-679-0033
LUK, Inc., Fitchburg: 978-829-2248
South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Framingham: 508-879-2250
NFI Ambulatory Services, Haverhill: 978-373-1181 ext. 11
Lowell House, Inc., Lowell: 978-459-8656
The Gandara Center, Springfield: 413-732-2120 ext. 210

Resources

Bettors Anonymous: 978.988.1777 or 781.662.5199
Department of Veterans’ Services: 888.844.2838
Division on Addictions, Cambridge Health Alliance, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School: 781.306.8600
Gam-Anon (family/friends): 888.644.8482
Gamblers Anonymous MA Hotline: 888-GA HELPS (888-830-2271)
Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling Helpline: 800.426.1234
National Council on Problem Gambling Helpline: 800.522.4700

SAVE THE DATE

for our Annual Conference!

THE 2016 MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE ON GAMBLING PROBLEMS:

APRIL 14 AND APRIL 15, 2016 at The Four Points by Sheraton, Norwood Hotel

See p2 for details