



150 YEARS
OF ADVANCING
PUBLIC
HEALTH

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

UPDATE ON THE OFFICE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING SERVICES: *ENGAGEMENT, EQUITY, AND EMPOWERMENT*

Public Health Council

September 11th, 2019

Victor Ortiz

Director of the Office of Problem Gambling Services

Expanded Gaming 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.



Gaming Act: Public Health Trust Fund

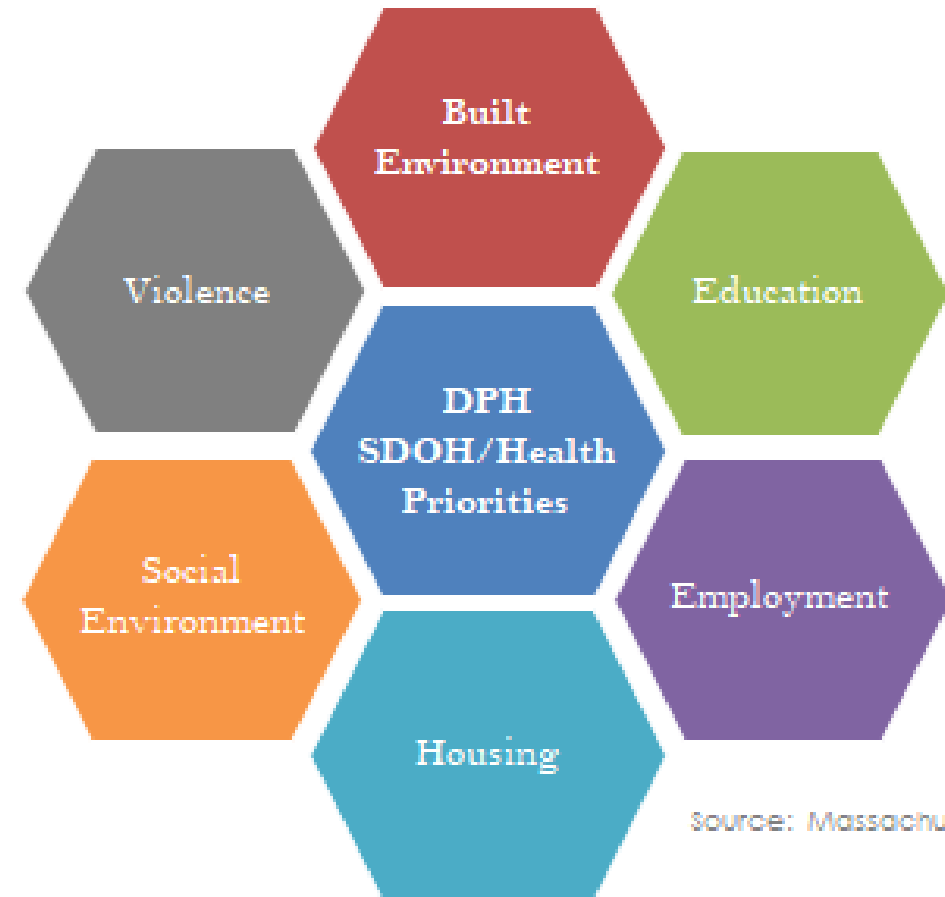
The Expanding Gaming Act established the Public Health Trust Fund (PHTF) *to allocate significant resources to research, prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services in order to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling and related issues.*

Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee:

- Enrique Zuniga- Commissioner, Mass Gaming Commission, Co-Chair
- Lindsey Tucker- Associate Commissioner, Department of Public Health, Co-Chair
- Michael Sweeney- Executive Director, Mass State Lottery Commission
- Angela Davis- Assistant Undersecretary, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Carlene Pavlos- Executive Director, Mass Public Health Association

Problem Gambling and SDoH

- **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** takes a community-driven approach that is rooted in the Social Determinants of Health, with a racial equity lens.



Session 6: Improving Health Outcomes



Problem Gambling: Key Points

National

- Problem gambling has a high level of co-morbidity with substance use disorder and mental health (Alegría, Petry, Hasin, Liu, Grant, & Blanco, 2009).
- Disproportionately impacts individuals with mental health disorders, substance use disorders, and communities of color (Alegría, Petry, Hasin, Liu, Grant, & Blanco, 2009).
- Community-level experiences of gambling and communities of color are often not the focus of problem gambling services and efforts.

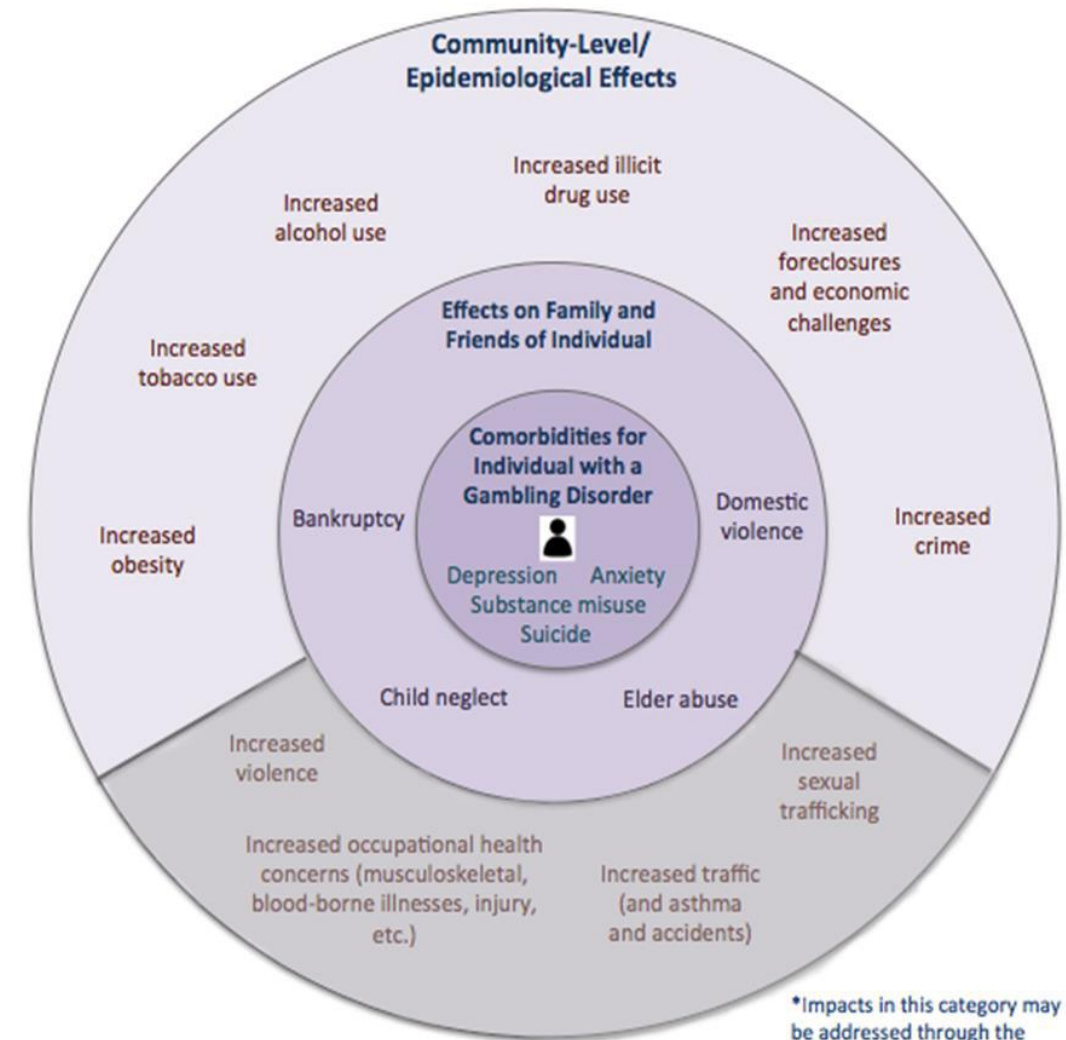
Massachusetts

- Research demonstrates that the prevalence of Recreational Gambling in MA was 57.4% and gamblers are more likely to: ***be obese, smoke heavily, use alcohol, and use prescription drugs*** (Okunna, N. C., Rodríguez-Monguió, R., Smelson, D. A., Poudel, K. C., & Volberg, R. (2016).

Public Health Trust Fund: Strategic Plan

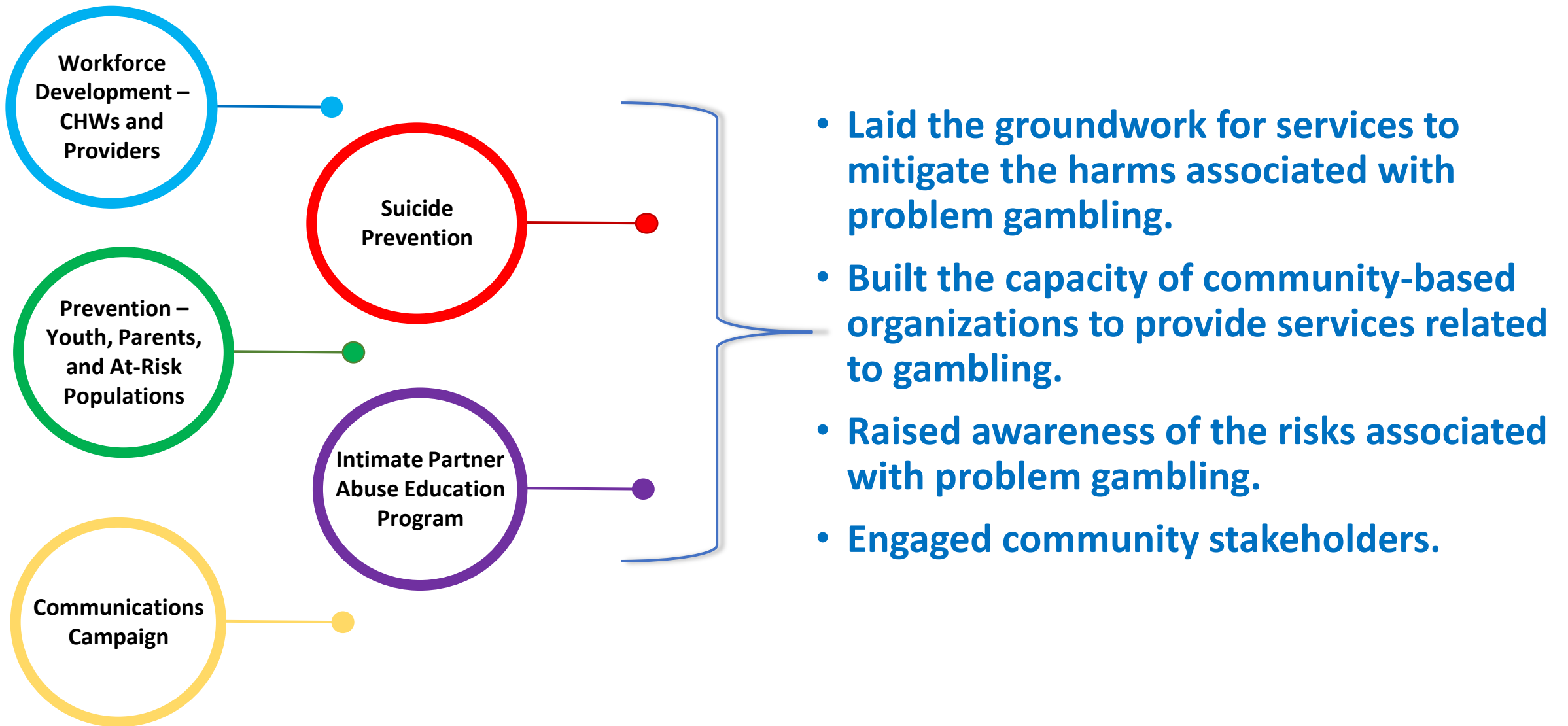
Priorities Areas/Key Areas of Concern

- **Prevention for Youth**
- **Prevention for High-Risk Populations**
- **Focus on Community-Level Interventions**
- **Coordination of Problem Gambling Services**
- Integration of Addiction Services, Mental Health Services, and Primary Care
- Decrease in Stigma and Unsupportive Social Norms
- Increase in Availability of Support Services
- Increase in Availability of Culturally Appropriate Services
- Contribution to the Evidence Base for Problem Gambling Services
- Establishment of an Evaluation Infrastructure
- Expansion of Institutional Capacity to Address Problem Gambling and Related Issues



*Impacts in this category may be addressed through the Community Mitigation Fund

FY17 - FY19: Office of Problem Gambling Services Initiatives



Community Engagement

Stakeholders provide **cultural & community expertise** to inform the implementation & planning of initiatives

Community Engagement supports a **comprehensive & integrated** public health response to gambling

Over **1000** individuals engaged in various communities since 2017



Community Engagement

Regional Planning Process
CHW Needs Assessments
Stakeholder Listening Session

Over 1,000 individuals engaged with 40 community partners across all three regions

Primary Prevention

Community Level Health Project
Community: Springfield and Everett

Community Campaigns:
Targeting Youth and Parents

Suicide Prevention:
Community Driven Activities

Secondary Prevention

Photovoice:
Youth and Parents

Ambassador Project:
Men of Color

CHW Community Pilot
Community: Springfield

Tertiary Prevention

Community Campaigns:
Targeting Men of Color with History of
Substance Misuse

MassMen:
Gambling Screen

Technical Assistance

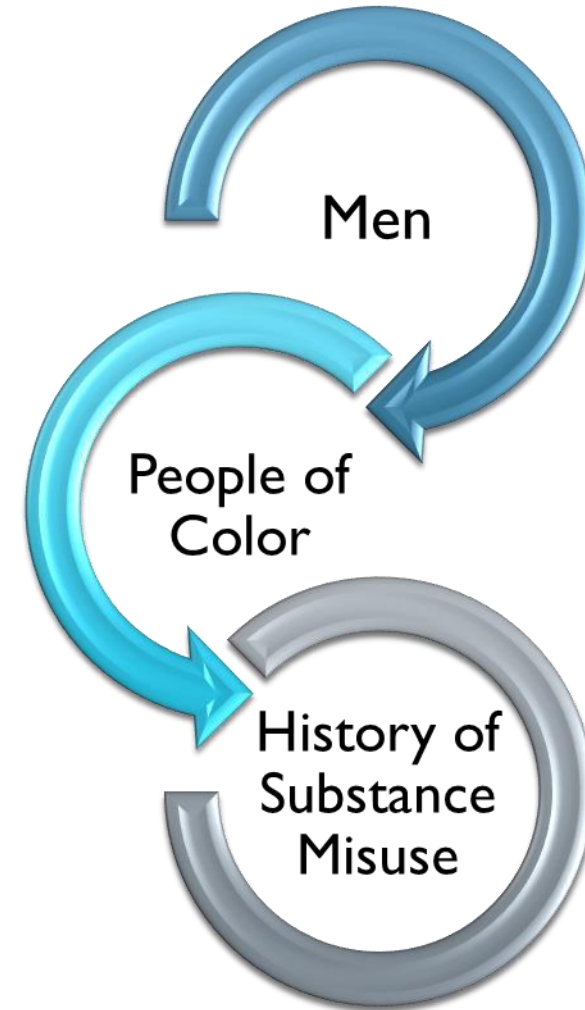
Provides structured support, guidance & coaching

Evaluation

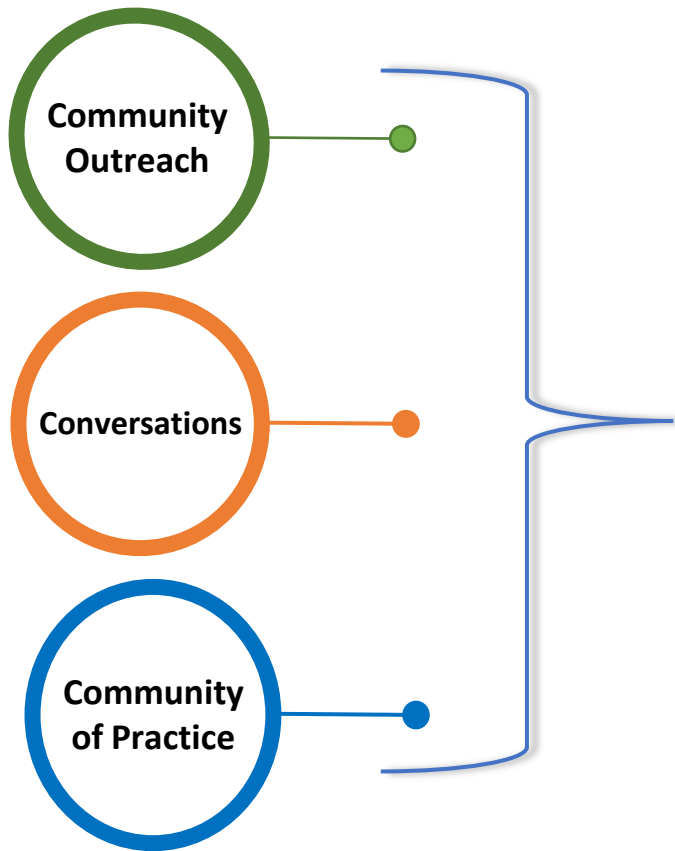
Community Centered & Culturally Responsive

MA Ambassador Project: Brockton and Hyannis

- **Massachusetts Ambassador Project** trains men of color with a history of substance misuse to lead peer-to-peer conversations with other men of color with a history of substance misuse about problem gambling prevention.



MA Ambassador Project Outputs



- Reached **1,337** individuals from July 2017 – June 2018
- Facilitated **112** groups reaching **663** men, including **266** men of color
- Had **255** conversations with high-risk individuals in a variety of settings
- Attended **13** community events and discussed problem gambling prevention with **419** people

*FY19 outputs are currently being analyzed

**FY20 evaluation report will include project outcomes and outputs

Communication Campaign: Men of Color

- The **Ambassadors** have contributed to the Men of Color communications campaign
 - Boots on the ground distribution
- Collaboration illustrates best practices in prevention
 - Multiple strategies across different domains
- **English:** [YouTube](#)



A message from the
Massachusetts Department
of Public Health

DRUGS. ALCOHOL. GAMBLING.
Different stories. Same problem.

MA Photovoice: Brockton and Bridgewater

- **Massachusetts Photovoice Project** uses a youth-centered, participatory approach to engage local youth in using the Photovoice model to help prevent problem gambling.
- This approach to community change-making places youth, particularly those who experience disparities and inequitable balances of power, at the center of community change.



Suicide Prevention



Suicide and Gambling Trainings

- 40 providers and volunteers trained. Three trainings will be scheduled for FY20.

Community Suicide Coalitions

- Suicide coalition's community events – town hall meetings to raise awareness of gambling and suicide

Problem Gambling Treatment



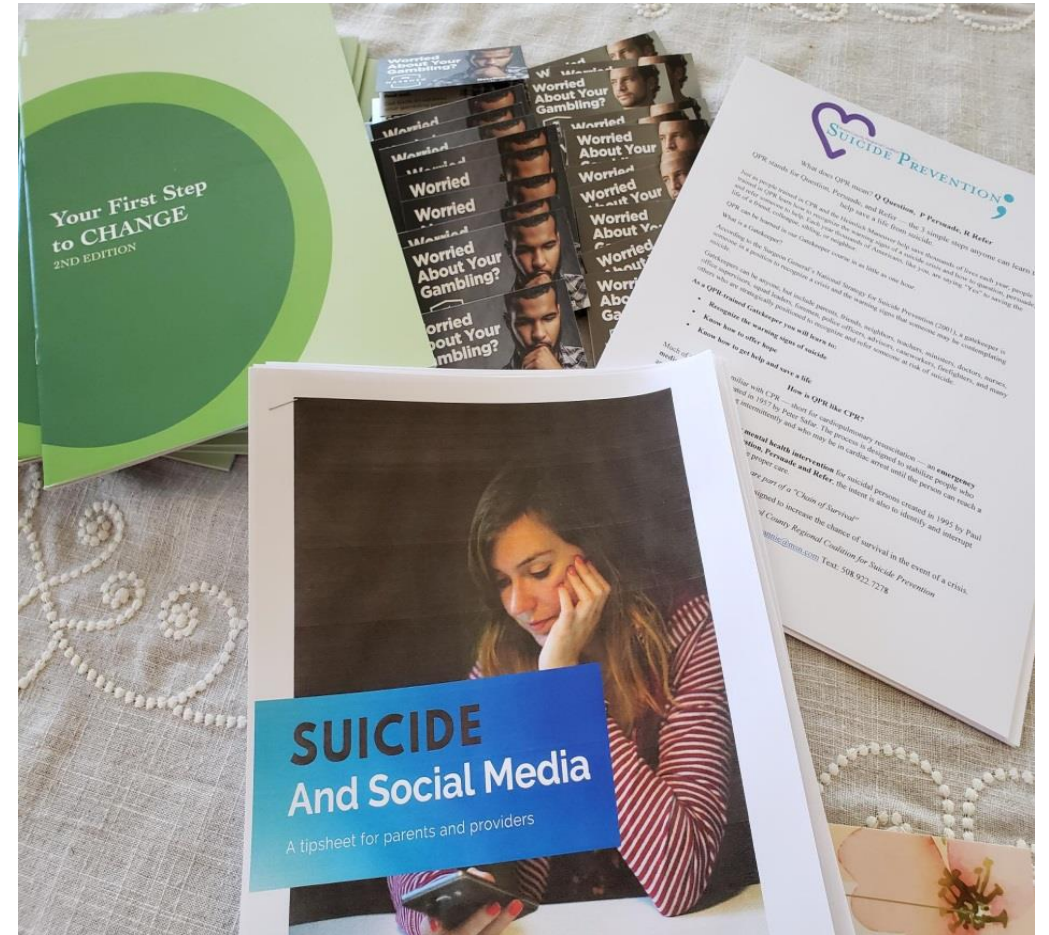
- A workforce development initiative to support the 40 outpatient gambling treatment services in the Commonwealth.

Key Highlights

- Material development and website enhancements to promote agencies' gambling services.
- Reimbursement for clinical supervision, coaching and/or mentoring relating to gambling treatment.
- Cost of the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist (MAPGS) application.
- Stipends for gambling treatment internships.

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, and develop problem gambling services.
- **Engage communities** to inform, develop, and implement services with a specific emphasis on marginalized populations.
- **Break down silos** and create meaningful integration that will promote health and wellness for everyone.





150 YEARS
OF ADVANCING
PUBLIC
HEALTH

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Thank You!

Victor Ortiz

Victor.Ortiz@state.ma.us