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Commissioner



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Louis Joseph Luchini, Chair
John C. Schneck, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs

Jeanne M. Lambrew

FROM: Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D., Commissioner
Department of Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: Annual Report on the Gambling Addiction Prevention and Treatment Fund

The Gambling Addiction Prevention and Treatment fund established per statute in 2009 provided the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) \$100,000 per year to prevent and address problems associated with gambling. When DHHS began receiving the funds in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011, collaborative relationships with key stakeholders statewide were re-established through regular conference calls. In February 2016, the substance use prevention team under SAMHS that is responsible for the oversight of this funding and programming was moved to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC), an office within DHHS, and renamed the Tobacco and Substance Use Prevention and Control Program. Program Manager Christine Theriault is the contact person within Maine CDC who oversees these services.

From 2010 to 2017, problem gambling services were implemented by Maine DHHS staff and through contracted services. Following a competitive bid process in 2017, problem gambling services are now implemented by AdCare Educational Institute (AdCare) and their subcontractor, the Maine Council on Problem Gambling (MCPG) with oversight by Maine CDC. The following report covers services implemented in SFY 2019:

Prevention:

- Training opportunities provided:
 - “Problem Gambling 101” training has been delivered at 8 sites so far this fiscal year (July 1, 2018 to present) including a webinar delivered to 2-1-1 call staff, which has been recorded for ongoing use.
 - “Understanding Youth Gambling and Gaming” is a 6-hour training presented by nationally renowned problem gambling expert Julie Hynes. This training was scheduled to take place in November, but due to weather, has been postponed to May. So far, 29 participants have registered.

- Maine’s Annual Conference on Problem Gambling Awareness was held on March 6, 2019 with 43 attendees. This is a conference that continues to be held each year to highlight Problem Gambling Awareness Month and is focused on professional development around prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery.
- Multiple public service announcements have been created and shared:
 - “Youth Problem Gambling: Know the signs” was developed and will run in social media as an educational campaign for parents to recognize the signs and know where to find help. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmLMCCp6uQM>
 - “Know When to Quit” is housed on the website of Maine Council on Problem Gambling and has been promoted widely on social media, resulting in 49.4k views to date. <https://youtu.be/VgoTtH515kA>
 - “Help Them Play it Safe” is also located on the Maine Council on Problem Gambling website and has been promoted widely on social media, receiving 18.3k views to date. <https://youtu.be/UFc8m9ntQGc>
- The Maine Council on Problem Gambling (MCPG) serves on the National Council on Problem Gambling State Affiliate Committee and is hosting the June 2019 meeting of the Northeast Consortium on Problem Gambling. In August, the MCPG joined other organizations nationwide to educate and advocate about the McDonalds Happy Meal campaign that featured gambling-related toys such as a slot machine and bingo card. The MCPG signed on to the National Council’s letter urging McDonalds to stop the campaign and educating them about the reasons that gambling toys are not appropriate for children. This was promoted in MCPG social media to educate the public about the subject.
- So far this year, there have been over 3,100 problem and responsible gambling related materials ordered from the Maine Prevention Store which provides information to the public through brochures, posters, rack cards, find help cards, and other such materials. For more information on the store visit www.maine-preventionstore.org
- The Maine CDC collaborated with the Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Lottery Operations on the printing of one of the Maine CDC’s “Safe Bet” (responsible gambling) rack cards, to be distributed at lottery retail stores across Maine.

Intervention:

- Until 2014, the only place a person could self-exclude was at a casino or the Gambling Control Unit office. Through collaboration with the Gambling Control Unit, legislation was passed that added nine sites across the State designated to serve as self-exclusion locations. (Self-exclusion is a self-directed intervention in which an individual bans himself from a casino, through a signed agreement.) In 2017, additional sites were established following AdCare’s role in program implementation.
 - To date we have 8 self-exclusion sites in communities and while no one has signed exclusion at those sites yet this year we continue to bring awareness of their availability and the option. At this time most self-exclusions are taking place at the casinos due to ease of access following a big loss when a determination of a problem is sometimes most likely.
 - The Gambling Control Unit has reported there are currently 327 people on the statewide self-exclusion list.

- Maine DHHS maintains a website and produces brochures with information and resources about the self-exclusion process, locations, and general information about problem and responsible gambling. For more information: www.maine.gov/selfexclusion
- Regular and frequent posts on social media sites by AdCare and the MCPG give information to the public about how and where to self-exclude. A recent boosted self-exclusion post on the MCPG Facebook page had a reach of 9957 people.
- A “find help” pocket card that contained a screening tool on one side and information on how to find help on the second side was developed by Maine DHHS and disseminated through the efforts of the community coalitions which administer the nine designated self-exclusion sites, and have continued to be disseminated through the two casinos in Maine.

Treatment:

Over the years, Maine DHHS has implemented multiple treatment pilot projects to increase the number of people accessing problem gambling treatment.

- The latest pilot developed a network of treatment providers trained specifically on problem gambling known as the “Problem Gambling Treatment Network.”
 - Ongoing trainings have been offered for treatment providers on how to become members of the network. Eligible providers receive reimbursement when they provide treatment to individuals and their families who have no other means to pay for treatment. This continues to be an underutilized service for many reasons. AdCare has consistently tried to enhance this project, including implementation of a needs assessment and training.
 - A significant obstacle to utilizing these funds to provide treatment is that licensed alcohol and drug counselors (LADC) cannot provide gambling addiction treatment because the statute indicates it is outside of their scope of practice. A statute change would remove this barrier and provide services to many who already receive treatment for substance use disorders. Another obstacle is that individuals living with gambling addiction may already be in treatment for mental health and/or substance use disorder and are not identifying gambling addiction as a problem. We are working to increase screening for gambling addiction to resolve this concern.
- Maine DHHS collaborates with 2-1-1 to advertise and provide the gambling hotline. The hotline (2-1-1) refers callers to the list of specially trained problem gambling treatment providers, bringing resources closer to home for Maine people. They also promote Problem Gambling Awareness month and provide data on calls to 2-1-1. There is an average of 5-7 calls per month to 2-1-1 for gambling-related resources.

Other:

- Media coverage:
 - On July 19, 2018, Jamie Comstock, Promotion Manager at Bangor Public Health and member of the Maine Council on Problem Gambling, was interviewed on the topic of youth gambling, how to recognize that your child may have a problem and where to find help. (FOX/Bangor)
 - On March 6, 2019, Scott Gagnon, Executive Director of AdCare Educational and President of the Maine Council on Problem Gambling was interviewed during Problem Gambling Awareness Month (WABI)