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## **Massachusetts Gaming Commission Launches Innovative Longitudinal Cohort Study to Examine How Problem Gambling Develops, Progresses, and Remits**

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission announced today that it will partner with the University of Massachusetts Amherst's School of Public Health and Health Sciences to conduct a first-of-its-kind, multi-year cohort study to examine how gambling problems develop over time and thus illuminate the causes of problem gambling. This ground-breaking research project, known as the **Massachusetts Gambling Impact Cohort (MAGIC)** study, will have significant value as it will highlight factors critical to developing strategic and data-driven problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery support services in Massachusetts.

According to Steve Crosby, Chairman of the Commission; "A key and truly distinguishing feature of the Commonwealth's expanded gaming law was to establish a comprehensive research agenda to assess the impacts of casino gambling in Massachusetts. The Commission looks forward to implementing this thoughtful mandate with enthusiasm and innovation," Chairman Crosby added, "MAGIC promises to be a landmark study, providing new and much needed information about incidence rates and the course of problem gambling in Massachusetts. MAGIC will yield important and unique information leading to treatment and prevention initiatives that are specifically tailored to the needs of the people of the Commonwealth."

"Massachusetts is nationally recognized for leadership in public health and this initiative is yet another example that demonstrates that commitment," said Cheryl Bartlett, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

The study's Principal Investigator, Dr. Rachel Volberg of the UMass Amherst School of Public Health and Health Sciences, said "This is the first major cohort study of gambling etiology to be carried out in the United States and we are tremendously excited about the synergies that will be possible with the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA) study that is already underway at UMass Amherst. We anticipate learning a great deal about how gambling problems among Massachusetts residents develop, progress and remit—information that will assist the Gaming Commission and the Department of Public Health in crafting the right mix of programs and services to effectively prevent and mitigate gambling harm in the Commonwealth."



Massachusetts Gaming Commission

The Commission released a Request for Proposals on November 20, 2013 to address the third component of the statutorily mandated research agenda, including:

- Establishing a baseline estimate of problem gambling prior to the opening of new gaming facilities;
- Assessing the incidence of new cases of problem gambling in Massachusetts;
- Assessing patterns of continuity and discontinuity in gambling behavior as well as recovery from problems; and
- Assessing the impacts over time on various age cohorts related to environmental changes including casino proximity, gaming advertising, public attitudes, and the development of treatment and prevention programs.

The Procurement Management Team that evaluated the proposals included U.S. researchers and partners at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This team unanimously selected the proposal from the University of Massachusetts Amherst for its potential to make a significant contribution to Massachusetts by providing critical information to target resources for problem gambling prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support. The proposal was also selected because of its methodological strength, cost-effectiveness, and the demonstrated excellence of its research team. In addition to their experience implementing longitudinal cohort studies in other jurisdictions, the UMass Amherst research team has been working with the Commission for the past two years to carry out the SEIGMA study, which uses different methods to evaluate the social and economic impacts of gambling expansion in Massachusetts.

Each study will produce considerable evidence relevant to the other study's focus. Thus, the findings of both studies will be synergistic, producing results much richer than any stand-alone effort.

The cost of the first year of the study is estimated at \$963,000. The study will launch later this month, with its first wave of data collection taking place in January 2015. Following that, data will be collected annually.

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