



For Immediate Release  
May 9, 2013

Media Contact  
Elaine Driscoll (MGC) 617-571-2964  
Press release: 13-037

## **Massachusetts Gaming Commission Launches Comprehensive, First-of-its-Kind Research Agenda to Study Socio and Economic Impacts of Expanded Gaming**

Today the Massachusetts Gaming Commission announces the engagement of a research team at UMass Amherst to oversee, evaluate and perform a multi-year, multi-method, multi-disciplinary, multi-phase comprehensive research project on the economic and social impacts of the introduction of casino gambling in Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on problem gambling.

The Gaming Act requires that the Massachusetts Gaming Commission establish an “annual research agenda” in order to understand the social and economic effects of expanded gaming in the Commonwealth. This first-of-its-kind research project will create a monitoring system that will accomplish the following:

- Provide Massachusetts stakeholders with a baseline assessment of the status of gambling and other factors for strategic analysis and decision-making
- Generate early detection signs of changes in social and economic impacts
- Promote responsible gambling and mitigate problem gambling through strategic services

Commissioner Enrique Zuniga stated, “This research mandate is an opportunity to create a nearly unique, comprehensive, and longitudinal, academic-quality study and series of studies regarding the socio and economic impacts of introducing expanded gaming to a new governmental jurisdiction,” Commissioner Zuniga added, “All of the research will be designed to not only assess these impacts, but to guide and assess remediation strategies for the potential negative effects.”

The study's Principal Investigator, Professor Rachel Volberg of the UMass Amherst School of Public Health and Health Sciences, said “This is the first time that the question of how the impacts of casino gambling change over time will be addressed in a comprehensive way. No other jurisdiction in the world has attempted such an effort. This study will be an important resource for stakeholders in Massachusetts and elsewhere for many years to come.”



Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Marlene Warner, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling, stated, “The Commission's strong commitment to researching gambling and problem gambling’s impact in the Commonwealth is not only highly commendable, but it is also cutting edge. This is the first study of this magnitude in the United States. It will provide solid and important data to inform problem gambling services and policy, within Massachusetts, and with similar programs in the United States and abroad.”

The Commission issued a competitive Request for Response (“RFR”) on November 21, 2012, to engage a collaboration of researchers and consultants for implementation of a research initiative that establishes a baseline for the economic and sociological indicators in the geographic areas (“baseline study”), and then to propose and implement an on-going, periodic measurement and analysis of those indicators throughout the life of the gaming operation. The Procurement Management Team that evaluated the responses included principals from the Mass Council on Compulsive Gambling, the Department of Public Health and the Commission.

A main objective of the research RFR was to identify, select and contract with a multidisciplinary research team of experts in survey research, econometrics, psychology, economic, and other social sciences who are knowledgeable about the gambling industry and/or its impacts, who would commit to detailing and implementing the research agenda prescribed in the gaming act. Two of the four responses received were quite comprehensive and included nationally recognized experts in socio-economic impacts in general and problem gambling in particular.

The Commission intends to employ a public health approach and will conduct research under a rigorous peer-review process and eventually publish the research efforts in reputable academic journals. The initial phase of this effort is estimated at \$3.5 million and focuses on ascertaining the current prevalence of gambling in Massachusetts. In addition, the initial phase will also include social and economic indicators to later identify and measure impacts attributable to the introduction of casinos in the different regions of the state.

#### **About MGC**

The mission of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission is to create a fair, transparent, and participatory process for implementing the expanded gaming law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in November, 2011. In creating that process, the Commission will strive to ensure that its decision-making and regulatory systems engender the confidence of the public and participants, and that they provide the greatest possible economic development benefits and revenues to the people of the Commonwealth, reduce to the maximum extent possible the potentially negative or unintended consequences of the new legislation, and allow an appropriate return on investment for gaming providers that assures the operation of casino-resorts of the highest quality. For more information on MGC, please visit [MassGaming.com](http://MassGaming.com) or connect and share on Twitter (@MassGamingComm) or Facebook ([www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm](http://www.facebook.com/MAGamingComm)).



Massachusetts Gaming Commission