

Find your Footing on the Precarious Path of Reducing Gambling Harms



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Considerations



Gambling landscaping is changing

Shifting focus from Problem Gambling to Responsible Gaming to Gambling Harms

Increased priority of building the evidence to promote positive play and reduce gambling related harm

A regulator's RG goal: Create a sustainable, accountable, measurable, and socially responsible approach to gambling

Responsible Gaming vs Problem Gambling

Massachusetts Responsible Gaming Framework

Problem Gambling



Difficulty in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling, which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others or the community.

Neal, P. N., Delfabbro, P. H., & O'Neil, M. G. (2005). Problem gambling and harm: Towards a national definition

Responsible Gaming vs Problem Gambling

Massachusetts Responsible Gaming Framework

Responsible Gaming



The provision of gambling services designed to encourage players to maintain their gambling at a healthy level and minimize harm to consumers and the community.

McMillen, J., & McAllister, G. (2000, May). Responsible gambling: Legal and policy issues. In 3rd National Gambling Regulation Conference, Rex Hotel, Sydney (pp. 11-12).

What are Gambling-Related Harms?

▶ **Gambling related-harms:**
Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of any individual, family unit, community or population.

- ▶ **Dimensions of Gambling Harm:**
- ▶ Financial
 - ▶ Work or study
 - ▶ Health
 - ▶ Emotional or psychological
 - ▶ Relationships
 - ▶ Cultural
 - ▶ Criminal activities

Driving Principles

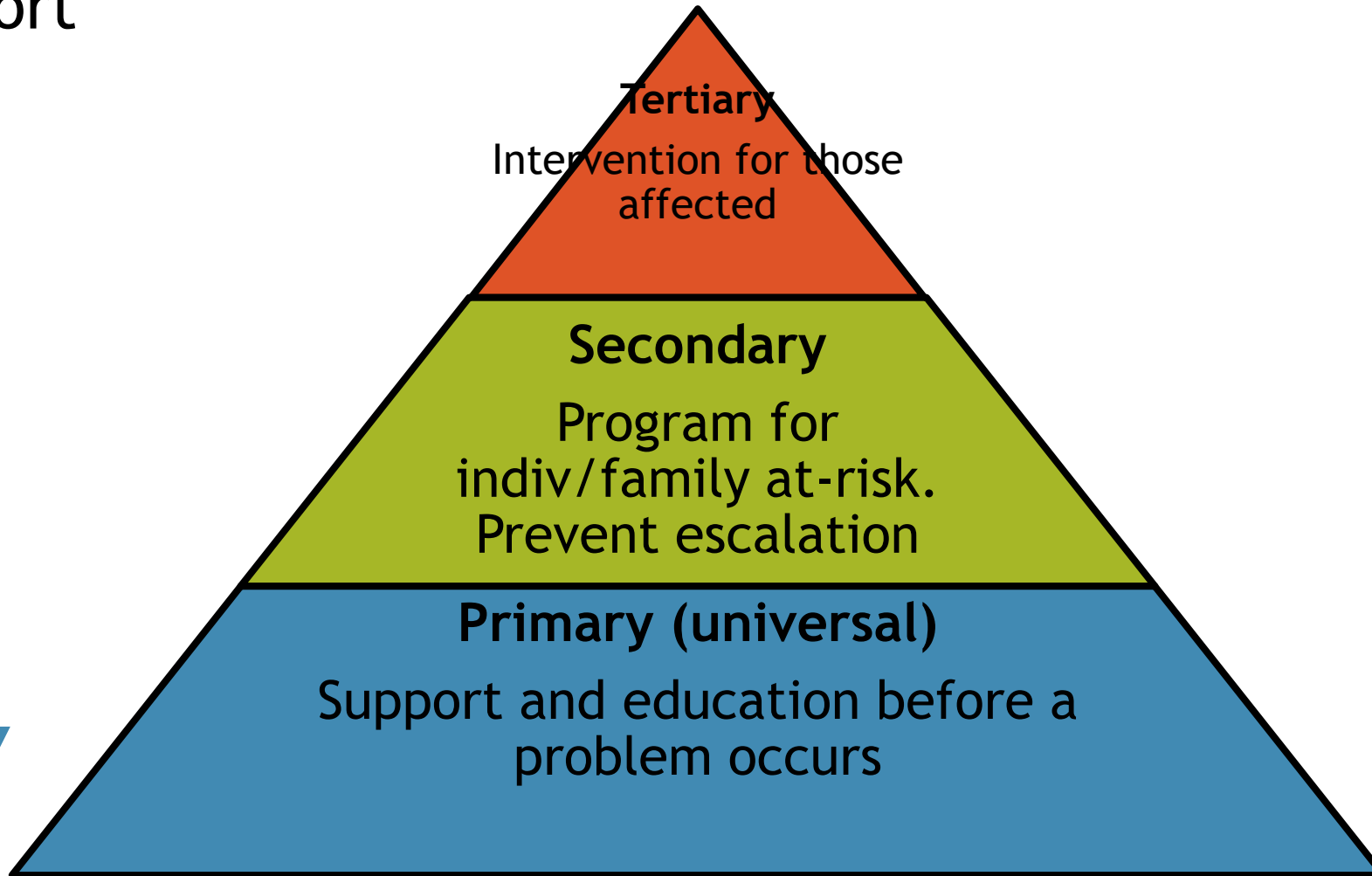
Expanded Gaming Act

Explicit commitment to mitigate negative and unintended consequences

- Support for robust problem gambling prevention and mitigation programs and services.
- **Annual research agenda** to study, assess and prepare for the social and economic impacts of casino gambling.

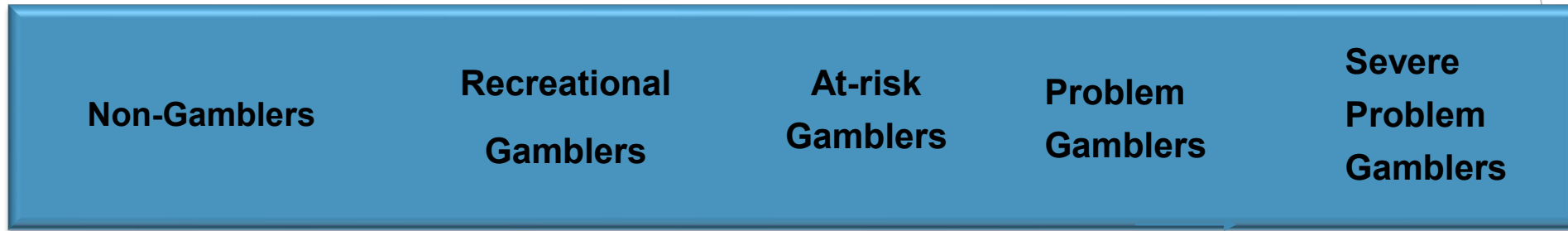
Public Health Pyramid

Effort



Cost \$\$

The Gambling Continuum



Non-Gamblers

Recreational Gamblers

At-risk Gamblers

Problem Gamblers

Severe Problem Gamblers

Enjoyment
Recreation
Socializing

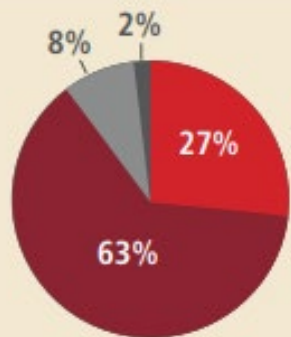
Betting more than planned
Spending more time gambling than planned
Borrowing \$ to gamble
Illusions of control

Impaired control
Experiencing negative consequences
Affecting family, friends, and community

Sustained impaired control
Experiencing significant negative consequences
Recurring problems over time

Gambling Behavior in Massachusetts Before Casinos

- Non-gambler
- Recreational gambler
- At-risk gambler
- Problem gambler



Principles to Practice

Massachusetts Gaming Commission Responsible Gaming Program



GameSense

Promote a positive approach to play with patrons and peace of mind with the general public.

- A voice of reason offering facts for a clear perspective.
- Clarify myths and messages around gambling.
- Help players understand the rules of the games
- Presented on multiple platforms.



Impact

Improve health and well-being of Massachusetts Residents

Effect

Advances in the creation of an effective, sustainable, measurable, socially responsible and accountable approach to gambling

Outcome

RG enable casino workforce

Promote Positive Play

Reduce gambling related harm

Target Audience





LRGG

Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines

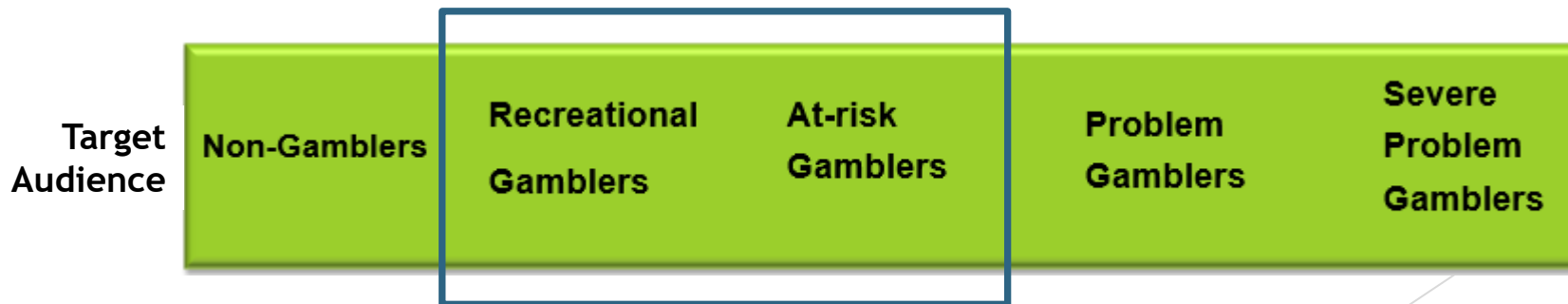
Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines: Show how to lower the risks and harms associated with gambling:

- Gamble no more than 4 days per month.
- Avoid regularly gambling on more than 2 types of games
- Don't gamble more than 1% of monthly household income





A first-of-its-kind budget-setting tool for slot machine play. This tool allows patrons the ability to monitor the amount of money they spend on electronic gaming machines.





Voluntary Self-Exclusion

- Available to assist patrons who recognize that they have experienced a loss of control over their gambling and wish to invoke external controls
- An engaged approach
 - Primarily administered by GSAs
 - VSE Recovery Support Liaison
 - Reinstatement requirement



Mobilizing Research



Evidence-based vs Precautionary Approach

Evidence-Based- Focus on the use of the best available evidence to bring about desirable results or prevent undesirable ones.

The explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients.

Precautionary Approach- When an activity causes some threat or harm to the public or environment, general precautionary measures should be taken. Lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent harm

Research into Practice:

Ensure Players Make Informed Decisions

Research Findings:

- ▶ Individuals are responsible for their level of gambling.
- ▶ Players should have all the necessary information and resources available to make well informed decisions on when to gamble, when to stop, and how much to spend.
- ▶ Information should include facts about gambling, probabilities of winning, prize structure, etc. and can also include information about the player's own behavior to promote behavioral transparency.

Application: Invest and expand RG programs and messages that provide players with the information they need to make informed decisions about gambling.

- ▶ Players can access 24-hour responsible gaming tips, tricks and information at GameSense Info Centers at all MA casinos, or at GameSenseMA.com

Blaszczynski, A., Ladouceur, R., Nower, L., & Shaffer, H. (2005). Informed choice and gambling: Principles for consumer protection.

Blaszczynski, A., Ladouceur, R., & Shaffer, H. J. (2004). A science-based framework for responsible gambling: The Reno Model. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 20(3), 301-317.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOGS.0000040281.49444.e2>

Research into Practice: Influence throughout the gambling journey

Research: MA study found instability of gambling behavior between non-gambler, recreational, at-risk, and problem gamblers. Stability & transitions in MA cohort suggest that PGs and At-Risk Gamblers are unlikely to transition to Non-Gambler status.

Application: Opportunity to influence gamblers at different points of their gambling journey through prevention, treatment, and policies to support player health.

→ GameSense uses a stepped-care approach providing patrons with information relevant to their specific needs (e.g., different resources for at-risk vs problem gamblers). Approach that works across the spectrum of gamblers.

Stepped Care Approach

PROBLEM PLAYERS

Improve access to programs and services to prevent escalation and maximize recovery.

AT-RISK PLAYERS

Increase early intervention through access to tools and resources to support positive play.

POSITIVE PLAYERS

Focus on promotion and prevention by providing access to information, advice, and self-help resources.

Research into practice: Support Positive Play

Positive Play: Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behavior of players about gambling so that it remains a recreational activity, and creates minimal risk of experiencing gambling-related harm.

Research:

- ▶ Most MA players scored medium or low on gambling literacy.
- ▶ Personal responsibility, honesty, control of gambling, and pre-commitment to a money and time limit is correlated with higher levels of gambling satisfaction.

Application:

- ▶ Educate players about the nature of gambling and address erroneous beliefs.
- ▶ Offer clear and concise information on how games and payouts work.

→ In the casinos and through community outreach, GameSense Advisors offers facts for a clear perspective of the players' gambling. Clarify the thousands of myths and messages around gambling.

Research into practice: Encourage Treatment

Research: People who obtain formal treatment have better long-term outcomes compared to people who do not receive treatment. Only a small minority of people with gambling problems want or seek out formal treatment.

Application:

- ▶ Encourage treatment-seeking and increase the availability of self-help materials.
- ▶ Provide prominent advertising to helplines and resources.

→ GameSense offers an engaged approach to voluntary self-exclusion, in-person and remotely, and connects people with a recovery support specialist and/or treatment providers.

MAGIC Research Team (2021). MAGIC: A Six-Year Longitudinal Study of Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts. Amherst, MA: School of Public Health and Health Sciences, UMass Amherst. April 16, 2021.

Research into practice: Encourage Pre-commitment

Research:

- ▶ MA players scored the second lowest on pre-commitment factors.
- ▶ Personal responsibility, honesty, control of gambling, and pre-commitment to a money and time is correlated with higher levels of gambling satisfaction.
- ▶ Lack of evidence-informed guidelines about how to gamble in a way that poses minimal risk.

Application: Encourage control of gambling and pre-commitment by offering tools to track and limit money and time spent gambling. Develop gambling guidelines to inform limit-setting.

- ▶ Players have access to PlayMyWay at PPC and MGM, soon at EBH (fall 2022). The LRGGs are integrated into GameSense activities and messaging (e.g., brochures, lanyard cards).

▶ Wood, R., & Tabri, N. (2021). Positive Play: Measuring Responsible Gaming in Massachusetts.

▶ Currie, S. R., & Low Risk Gambling Guidelines Scientific Working Group. (2019). A research plan to define Canada's first low-risk gambling guidelines. *Health promotion international*, 34(6), 1207-1217.

Research into practice: Support Higher-Risk Players

Research:

- ▶ Higher frequency multi-game players scored lower on gambling literacy and personal responsibility and reported more gambling related problems. They were more likely to be male and younger age, and less likely to be white.
- ▶ Some communities are disproportionately impacted by gambling including Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

Application:

- ▶ Develop responsible gaming programs targeting at-risk players.

→ GameSense incorporates ways to target at-risk players (e.g., sports quiz to attract younger players, geofencing). GSA includes representatives of higher-risk pop. Materials available in different languages.

Research into practice:

Whitepaper: Considerations for sports wagering

Research: Participation in sports wagering is considered one of the strongest predictive variables for concurrent and future problem gambling. People who bet on sports and pay to play daily fantasy are 2-3 times more likely than other gamblers to report problematic play.

Application: Sports wagering policy and regulation should include robust measures to promote positive play and mitigate harm.

Examples: extending PlayMyWay to online sports wagering platforms, offering automated alerts with the escalation of gambling expenditures, provide prominent advertising to helplines and resources, gambling advertising should not target people at higher-risk of gambling harms, or include content intended to appeal people below the legal age.

National Council on Problem Gambling, 2nd National Survey on Gambling Attitudes and Gambling Experience(2021).

MAGIC Research Team (2021). MAGIC: A Six-Year Longitudinal Study of Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts. Amherst, MA: School of Public Health and Health Sciences, UMass Amherst. April 16, 2021.

Research into practice:

Whitepaper: RG Considerations for Gambling Advertising

Research: Exposure to gambling advertising is associated with more positive gambling related-attitudes, greater gambling intentions, and increases in gambling and problem gambling behavior. Gambling advertising can potentially reach many population groups, including young people and groups at higher-risk of experiencing gambling-related harms.

Application: Careful consideration is needed in terms of the content, and distribution of gambling advertising.

- ▶ The MGC developed a whitepaper to help inform decisions on policies and regulations related to gambling advertising in MA.

Thankyou!

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Resources:

- ▶ MA Responsible Gaming Framework: <https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/MGC-Responsible-Gaming-Framework-2.0.pdf>
- ▶ Applying principles of the MA Responsible Gaming Framework to Sports Wagering Policy and Practice: <https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Applying-Principles-of-the-Massachusetts-Responsible-Gaming-Framework-to-Sports-Wagering-Policy-and-Practice-6.14.21.pdf>
- ▶ MGC Research Agenda and Library: <https://massgaming.com/about/research-agenda/>
- ▶ GameSense Impact Report: <https://gamesensema.com/impactreport/?page=1>
- ▶ MGC Responsible Gaming Considerations for Gambling Advertising: <https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Gambling-Advertising-White-Paper-3.14.22.pdf>