

FY2021 Problem Gambling Plan Outline

- FY20 – budgeted \$100,000 for problem gambling.
- FY21 – proposing to spend \$250,000 for problem gambling treatment
 - \$200,000 to stand-up and pay for state-wide treatment including:
 - In-person group
 - In-person individual
 - Phone based
 - Text based
 - Internet based
 - \$50,000 to create and run advertising to educate and inform Vermonters about problem gambling and how to obtain no cost treatment.

Narrative

For FY21 the Department has requested \$250,000 for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling. This is up from the \$100,000 in our FY20 budget. During last year's budget presentation, the question was asked if \$100,000 was enough money to address the problem. Our response was we did not have enough knowledge and experience to provide a definitive answer but promised to return in this session to layout our plan.

At the Lottery we recognize that we are in the controlled substance business. Despite encouraging players to “play responsible” and to do so for fun and entertainment a very small percentage of players will become problem gamblers. We believe that we have a social responsibility mission obligates us to help those people who develop an addiction to gambling.

During the first half of FY20 we examined how problem gambling funds have been expended by the lottery in the past. We also consulted with problem gambling experts from around the country, as well as with other jurisdictions who have been recognized for their work related to problem gambling, to formulate a plan to improve Vermont's efforts.

In the past the Lottery's problem gambling grant was a poor expenditure of money. It did not provide any treatment to those who sought it, rather it simply provided a referral to a possible provider. Unsurprisingly the problem gambler did not have the means to pay for treatment.

Our goal in requesting additional funds in FY21 is to provide no cost problem gambling treatment to anyone who wants to receive it. In FY20 we entered into a demonstration

grant with the Howard Center to provide in-person group and one-on-one treatment to those who have a gambling addiction issue. The Howard Center staff is expanding their training of staff to provide these services and will screen patients for indications of problem gambling symptoms.

For FY21 we plan to spend approximately \$200,000 to provide Vermonters with problem gambling treatment. Because we are a rural state, we are exploring phone, text and remote based treatment options that will make it more convenient for people to obtain treatment without the need to travel long distances to do so. We also plan to engage with other providers to ensure in-person treatment is available around the state. We plan to spend approximately \$50,000 to better educate the public about problem gambling and to let them know that there is no-cost treatment available to them, as well as how to find the help they need.