

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

FROM: Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health
Wendy Knight, Commissioner, Department of Liquor and Lottery

DATE: April 28, 2025

RE: Update on the State of Vermont Responsible Gaming Program

The Vermont Responsible Gaming Program continues to build a thoughtful, proactive approach to supporting healthy play and ensuring that individuals and communities have access to the resources they need. The program is developing a statewide network of well-informed providers and support systems that address gambling-related concerns with care and expertise.

Over the past year, the Program has expanded clinical training opportunities, launched the Vermont Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate, strengthened the Problem Gambling Provider Network, and introduced tools like 24/7 LiveChat to improve accessibility of supports. In tandem, media outreach and the Statewide Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program have enhanced awareness and empowered individuals to make informed decisions about their gaming behaviors.

The summary below highlights recent milestones and ongoing efforts to promote responsible gaming, support Vermonters in accessing help when needed, and ensure a strong, responsive network of care across the state.

- **Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians and Advanced Topics in Gambling Disorder**
 - To strengthen clinical skills in the problem gambling field in Vermont, the Responsible Gaming Program hosted *Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians*: a 10-session, 30-hour course to grow clinical skills in gambling disorder assessment, treatment, and recovery support, in both the fall and winter. Thirty-eight clinicians engaged in the training, with fifteen clinicians completing the full training series. Clinicians were awarded up to 30 CEU's commensurate with the sessions they attended. Attendees included clinicians treating adolescents, college students, adults, individuals with mental health issues or substance use disorders, and service members and veterans.
 - A Summer Series Training Institute with three advanced training courses is scheduled for this summer, with another 30-hour *Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians* training planned for this winter.



- The Responsible Gaming Program covers the cost of this training for clinicians who work or live in Vermont.
- **VT Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate**
 - The VT Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate documents that the clinician possesses evidence informed tools for screening, assessing, and treating gambling disorders within their clinical populations. This free certificate requires documentation of 30 hours of gambling specific education, which can be attained through the completion of *Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians* or other approved training. To date, seven clinicians have been awarded the Vermont Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate, with additional applications expected in the coming months.
 - The VT Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate is paid for with Responsible Gaming Program funds and is free to clinicians who live or work in Vermont.
 - A portion of the Responsible Gaming Program's media outreach is targeted to promoting the *Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians* training and the VT Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate program.
- **Problem Gambling Provider Network**
 - The Problem Gambling Provider Network (PGPN) continues to expand, and includes both Designated Agency clinicians and private practitioners who are dedicated to expanding their skillsets to treat individuals negatively impacted by gambling. PGPN members engage regularly with Department of Mental Health (DMH) Responsible Gaming Program staff and attend tri-annual meetings with their peers and Responsible Gaming Program staff. PGPN members are invited to attend virtual and regional gambling-related trainings and conferences, and are encouraged to engage in local events to support problem gambling awareness. To date, there are 12 PGPN members, with nine of the ten Designated Agencies represented in the network. The Responsible Gaming Program continues to support PGPN members in seeking their VT Problem Gambling Specialist Certificates.
- **Department of Mental Health Conference**
 - The Responsible Gaming Program supported three problem gambling presentations at the Department's Conference in April at the Killington Grand Resort Hotel in Killington, Vermont. The afternoon keynote, [*Everything Everywhere All at Once: Implications of the Expansion of Legalized Gambling for Mental Health Professionals*](#), was delivered by Keith Whyte, founder of Safer Gambling Strategies. Other sessions included [*Disordered Gambling: What Is It and How Does it Impact Military Service Members and Veterans*](#), which sparked active discussion on available services in Vermont, and [*Lived Experience as an Asset in Addressing Problem Gambling*](#), highlighting the Telephone Recovery Support intervention available to Vermonters. Program staff promoted resources, shared information about the upcoming Summer Series Training Institute and distributed educational materials. They also networked with clinicians treating service members and veterans, college students, adolescents, in addition to other state agencies also represented at the conference.
- **Helpline and LiveChat**



Type of Vermont Helpline Contact	2024 (Feb-March)	2024 (April-June)	2024 (July-Sept)	2024 (Oct-Dec)	2025 (Jan-March)
Calls for Problem Gambling Help	28	18	19	17	9
LiveChats	N/A (service not available)	N/A (service not available)	8	13	17
Total Interactions with Helpline Specialists	28	18	27	30	26
Additional calls to the Helpline (Hangups and calls seeking Vermont Lottery)	101	140	153	173	266

- VTGamblingHelp.org introduced LiveChat functionality in July 2024, which allows Helpline Specialists to respond 24/7 to outreach via the website, in real time. In the last 3 quarters of SFY2025, there have been 38 chats initiated by VTGamblingHelp.org visitors, primarily seeking information about gambling resources or general information. LiveChat conversations have now outpaced calls to 1-800-GAMBLER, indicating that they are a relevant and timely avenue for communication with those seeking help.
- Calls into the Helpline via 1-800-GAMBLER for responsible gaming and problem gambling support have remained relatively steady until the most recent quarter, when there appeared to be a dip from 17 calls to 9 calls. However, when combined with LiveChat numbers, there appears to be an overall regular rate of outreach for services via combined phone and internet-based services.
- Additional calls to the Helpline have increased over the past year. While these calls are not connecting people directly with Helpline Specialists, DMH believes that this increase in calls reflects both sports-betting marketing campaigns (which include the 1-800-GAMBLER number) and the Vermont-based marketing campaigns leading to increased awareness of the resource. The Responsible Gaming Program will continue to monitor this metric and adjust campaigns to ensure Vermonters are connected to resources and support.
- **VTGamblingHelp.org**
 - The VTGamblingHelp.org remains an integral part of the Responsible Gaming Program’s efforts to provide Vermonters with 24/7 access to information on player health, as well as resources and support for problem gambling, and to develop a competent problem gambling workforce. In addition to direct access to Helpline Specialists via the LiveChat feature, the site offers resources for both help-seekers and help-providers, such as information on digital resources and current training opportunities. Site visitors can also link directly to the Department of Liquor and Lottery’s statewide Voluntary Self-Exclusion portal, which offers an easy way to self-exclude from all three sports wagering operators.
- **Voluntary Self-Exclusion**
 - The Department of Liquor and Lottery (DLL) established a Statewide Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program (VSE), which allows a person to request to be excluded from legalized mobile sports



wagering activities in Vermont. From January 2024 through March 2025, seventeen (17) players signed up for VSE. The terms that individuals utilized for VSE are as follows:

- • 1-year: 4 individuals
- • 3- years: 1 individual
- • 5- years: 2 individuals
- • Lifetime: 10 individuals

- **Media Campaigns**

- One focus of the Responsible Gaming Program is to raise awareness of responsible gaming and problem gambling resources. To support the promotion of VTGamblingHelp.org, 1-800-GAMBLER and statewide Voluntary Self-Exclusion, media campaigns from September 2024 through March 2025 ranged from traditional gas station toppers to Facebook and Instagram posts, Google Ads and digital media ads on streaming audio and podcasts.
- In 2024, 19 posts on social media had 889,323 views, with 37 shares and 28 reactions. This led to 2,722 clicks back to the VTGamblingHelp.org site.
- From October to November 2024, Google Ads garnered 1.88 million views and provided 15 second messaging on how gambling is not a good way to make money, and on the Statewide Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program.
- VTGamblingHelp.org was also advertised in Seven Days in November 2024 and March 2025, to promote 1-800-GAMBLER. These promotions generated just under 200,000 views.
- In February 2025, DLL partnered with the Vermont Principal's Association (VPA) during Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) to increase awareness about resources available. The month-long strategic messaging effort included digital advertising on the VPA website, emails to VPA members introducing DLL and shared problem gambling resources, and both digital and in-person advertising at the boys' and girls' championship basketball games in March.
- Additional awareness campaigns occurred in September 2024 for Responsible Gambling Education Month and December 2024, when DLL collaborated with the National Council on Problem Gambling to promote the "Lottery Tickets Are Not Child's Play" campaign to emphasize responsible gifting practices. These campaigns include digital assets at the point-of-sale for lottery purchases, such as bitmaps (messages at the bottom of receipts) and social media messaging.

The Responsible Gaming Program continues to take meaningful steps to support informed, responsible play and ensure that individuals have access to high-quality care and resources when needed. By investing in workforce development, fostering collaboration across providers, and expanding awareness and access, the program is strengthening Vermont's capacity to address problem gambling-related concerns.

