



Vermont Department of Mental
Health
**Problem Gambling Program
and Expenditures**

Published:
1.14.2025





Contact Information

From:

Emily Hawes, Commissioner
Agency of Human Services, Department of Mental Health

**To receive this information in an alternative format or
for other accessibility requests, please contact:**

Jennifer Rowell
Agency of Human Services, Department of Mental Health
Jennifer.Rowell@vermont.gov, 802-241-0090



Table of Contents

Vermont Department of Mental Health Problem Gambling Program and Expenditures	1
Contact Information	2
Executive Summary	4
Legislative Language	5
Expenditures for State Fiscal Year 2024	6
Contract with the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health	6
Problem Gambling Helpline Established	8
Peer Specialist Support	9
Vermont Gambling Help Website	10
Problem Gambling Clinical Training and Certificate Program	11
Contractor Administrative Fees	12
Responsible Gaming Program Coordinator	12
Problem Gambling Awareness Month – March 2024	14
Conclusion	14
Department of Mental Health Problem Gambling Program and Expenditures – State Fiscal Year 2024	16



Executive Summary

This report details the State Fiscal Year 2024 (SFY24) expenditures for Vermont's Responsible Gaming Program, managed by the Department of Mental Health (DMH). The program, aimed at establishing and maintaining responsible gaming standards, spent \$34,814.09 of \$250,000 of available funds from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Liquor and Lottery (DLL) and utilized \$9,775.26 from DMH funds.

In SFY24, DMH achieved the lead goals of establishing a Vermont-specific problem-gambling helpline and website and continues to develop the Problem Gambling Provider Network (PGPN) to ensure training and development of a clinical workforce to support Vermonters in need of problem gambling treatment, with the goal of creating a comprehensive and accessible system to prevent and address problem gambling in Vermont.



Legislative Language

In accordance with Act 63 (2023),

*31 V.S.A. § 1341a. PROBLEM
GAMBLING PROGRAM*

(b) On or before January 15 of each year, the Department of Mental Health shall submit to the General Assembly a report detailing the expenditures related to the Problem Gambling Program in the preceding fiscal year and summarizing the programs and activities supported by those expenditures.



Expenditures for State Fiscal Year 2024

In the early part of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024, expenditures on the Responsible Gaming Program activities were minimal, as the program primarily utilized in-kind staff time. During the period, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) staff collaborated with the Department of Liquor and Lottery (DLL) and regional and national colleagues to collaborate on resources for Vermonters (for more information on the challenges associated with program implementation see the [2024 Problem Gambling Program & Expenditures Report](#)). Due to the availability of funds from the MOU with DLL, the program did not draw from the \$250,000 in funding available from the Sports Wagering Enterprise Fund.

On December 4th, 2023, DMH issued a Request for Proposals to identify a vendor to support the program in meeting the state's responsible gaming and problem gambling program. The Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health (MACGH) was selected as the vendor, and a contract was signed on February 15th, 2024.

In SFY24, the majority of Responsible Gaming Program expenditures in SFY24 were related to the MACGH contract, with DMH spending \$34,814.09 under the agreement. Additional funds totaling \$9,775.26 were spent on personnel costs and other program expenses not associated with the contract.

Contract with the Massachusetts Council on Gaming and Health

In response to the anticipated need for comprehensive responsible gaming and problem gambling services in Vermont,



DMH contracted with MACGH to establish a robust support network for individuals affected by problem gambling and promote responsible gaming practices across the state. This partnership aims to build a robust statewide network to support individuals affected by problem gambling while promoting responsible gaming practices.

Under the contract, MACGH will deliver a wide range of services, including:

- **24/7 Helpline Support:** Offering immediate assistance to individuals seeking help for problem gambling.
- **Peer Support Coordination:** Assisting individuals post-voluntary self-exclusion to ensure continued recovery and support.
- **Media Campaigns:** Raising public awareness about available resources and responsible gaming practices.
- **Training and Development:** Establishing and expanding a statewide Problem Gambling Provider Network to enhance service availability and expertise.

This initiative officially commenced in February 2024 and is slated to continue through February 2027, marking a significant step toward preventing the rise of problem gambling issues and supporting public health in Vermont.

Responsible Gaming Program expenditures in SFY24 related to the MACGH contract are outlined in the subsequent sections.



Problem Gambling Helpline Established

In SFY24, DMH worked with the National Problem Gambling Helpline (herein after referred to as the Helpline), MACGH, and a core group of clinicians comprising the Vermont Problem Gambling Provider Network, to improve overall accessibility for Vermonters seeking support and resources for problem gambling concerns. DMH then ensured Vermont treatment provider information is accessible to individuals reaching out to the Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLER, a nationally recognized helpline which covers all 50 states and U.S. territories.

Prior to the establishment of the Responsible Gaming Program at DMH, when a caller with an 802 area code or who self-identified as a Vermonter reached the Helpline at 1-800-522-4700 or 1-800-GAMBLER, they received non-Vermont-specific services. If a Vermont caller requested a referral for local treatment services, they were directed to the Howard Center in Burlington. From SFY19 through SFY22, the Howard Center provided no-cost gambling services statewide through a contract with the Department of Liquor and Lottery. After this contract ended, Howard Center remained the referral source on record for the Helpline.

In December 2023, DMH staff worked with leadership at the Helpline to expand referral options for individuals seeking support for problem gambling assistance in Vermont, by using the Vermont Problem Gambling Provider Network in addition to the existing Howard Center clinician.

In January 2024, MACGH took over management of Vermont-based calls from the Helpline. Trained peer Helpline Specialists employed by MACGH answer calls 24/7, 365 days of the year and have access to information on the Problem Gambling Provider



Network to support Vermont callers in connecting with appropriate treatment resources.

DMH and DLL's use of the Helpline number, 1-800-GAMBLER, increases visibility and accessibility for Vermonters to reach skilled and trained Helpline Specialists available to respond to calls 24/7/365. This number is used nationally on mobile sports wagering advertisements and can reach a wide audience.

The previous Helpline number, 1-800-522-4700, is currently listed on Vermont Lottery products and automatically routes to the 1-800-GAMBLER number, so all calls are routed appropriately as DLL works to update online and print materials.

The establishment and ongoing management of this helpline service cost \$19,249.98 for SFY24, reflecting a strategic investment in enhancing accessibility and support for problem gambling resources in Vermont.

Peer Specialist Support

MACGH has been training MACGH peer specialist staff to provide support to Vermonters who are offered and agree to engage with peer specialists for Telephone Recovery Support program. This program is designed to assist individuals after either opting out of online sports wagering apps via the state-run Voluntary Self-Exclusion program or seeking support through the Problem Gambling Helpline.

The Telephone Recovery Support Program will provide personalized peer supports tailored to the needs of the individual navigating recovery. DMH anticipates this service will be offered to Vermonters beginning in SFY25.



Training expenses for peer specialists have totaled \$4,999.98 for SFY24, reflecting an investment in building capacity for this critical support service.

Vermont Gambling Help Website

In June 2024, DMH partnered with MACGH to launch VtGamblingHelp.org, a comprehensive website for Vermonters affected by problem gambling. The site provides resources for individuals and families, as well as treatment providers seeking to better assist those in need.

A key component of VtGamblingHelp.org is the LiveChat feature, which connects users directly with Vermont Helpline Specialists from the 1-800-GAMBLER service through web-based or phone-based text chatting. By offering multiple ways Vermonters can access support, DMH ensures Vermonters can choose the method that best fits their needs, whether by phone or chat.

DMH will be monitoring the total chats per quarter, in addition to general chat topics and will be able to report on this information in SFY25 and subsequent SFYs. This monitoring will help evaluate the effectiveness of the LiveChat feature and guide future iterations and improvements.

The development and maintenance of the website cost \$2,398.22 in SFY24, reflecting a critical investment in expanding outreach and access to problem gambling resources in Vermont.



Problem Gambling Clinical Training and Certificate Program

In the fall of 2023, DMH supported Designated Agencies (DAs) in identifying and providing clinicians with access to free problem gambling training through the New York Council on Problem Gambling. Eleven clinicians from nine DAs committed to engaging in training throughout the year and attended Problem Gambling Provider Network meetings quarterly. At the close of SFY24, the Problem Gambling Provider Network had clinicians from nine DAs in attendance at meetings and is working to have a fully trained DA clinician for each catchment area. In addition, the Problem Gambling Provider Network contains and continues to recruit private clinicians across the state who are trained or are willing to become trained problem gambling clinicians.

To support the continued development of Vermont's problem gambling workforce, DMH partnered with MACGH to craft a Vermont-specific training program. This program will be offered twice in SFY25, at no cost to clinicians in Vermont or clinicians who provide services to Vermonters. MACGH prepared the curriculum for this 30-hour Problem Gambling Essentials for Clinicians training, set to run as a Day Training Institute in October – November 2024, and as an Evening Training Institute in February – March 2025.

Clinicians who complete this 30-hour training, or 30 hours of equivalent International Gambling Counselor Certification Board approved courses, along with meeting additional criteria, are eligible to apply for the Vermont Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate.

This certificate will allow for placement on the Vermont Problem Gambling Helpline Referral List and indicates that the clinician has been well-trained in gambling disorder assessment, treatment, and recovery support. DMH will market this opportunity



to clinicians in DAs, preferred provider agencies, private practices, employee assistance programs, higher education, correctional facilities and military-serving organizations and programs. DMH strives to meet the anticipated need for a trained, diverse workforce to support Vermonters with a range of financial means across the state, in a variety of levels of care.

The problem gambler is an individual potentially experiencing indebtedness and shame, factors which may lead to an increased risk for suicide and suicide attempts. It is critical to ensure a robust, accessible and trained workforce to support Vermont's goal to provide support for people experiencing or at risk of harm from the impacts of problem gambling.

The cost for the developmental stages of the Problem Gambling Clinical Training and Certificate Program in SFY24 was \$5,001.00. This investment lays the foundation for an accessible, statewide network of qualified clinicians to support Vermonters impacted by problem gambling.

Contractor Administrative Fees

As part of the MACGH contract, an administrative fee of 10% was also applied to all bills. In total for SFY24, administrative fees were \$3,164.91.

Responsible Gaming Program Coordinator

The Responsible Gaming Program Coordinator, hired in May 2024, manages the daily operations of the Responsible Gaming Program, ensuring effective implementation and compliance with Vermont Statute 31 V.S.A. § 1341a. This role includes close collaboration with the Department of Liquor and Lottery (DLL) and the responsible gaming and problem gambling program's contractor to align strategies and initiatives.



Key Responsibilities:

- Collaborating with DLL and MACGH to align strategies for responsible gaming and problem gambling initiatives.
- Supporting the Problem Gambling Provider Network by providing resources, guidance, and assistance to its members.
- Engaging with community stakeholders to raise awareness, foster relationships, and promote a culture of responsible gaming across Vermont.
- Building and supporting problem gambling treatment and recovery efforts.
- Staying informed about emerging trends in responsible gaming and problem gambling initiatives by working with regional and national partners.
- Sharing updates on Vermont's ongoing efforts to address problem gambling.

The Coordinator serves as a vital link in promoting a cohesive and effective system to support Vermonters impacted by problem gambling, ensuring that treatment and recovery services remain a priority.

This position was paid through DMH funding in May and June of SFY24, totaling \$9,046.00. Additional indirect expenses associated with program operations totaled \$431.73 and were paid through DMH funding.



Problem Gambling Awareness Month – March 2024

On February 28th, 2024, Governor Scott declared March 2024 Problem Gambling Awareness Month. To support Problem Gambling Awareness Month, the DMH Medical Director and Deputy Commissioner coordinated a series of activities and events to highlight the importance of addressing problem gambling and promoting available resources.

Key Activities included:

- **Media Engagement:** The DMH Medical Director appeared on multiple news outlets to educate the public about the warning signs of problem gambling and the importance of seeking help when recreational gaming becomes problematic.
- **Outreach to College Students:** The Medical Director attended a University of Vermont event, distributing promotional materials to encourage students to utilize the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline for support and resources.

Expenses for Problem Gambling Awareness Month events totaled \$297.53.

Conclusion

Vermont's Responsible Gaming Program, managed by the Department of Mental Health, has made significant progress in SFY24, spending a total of \$34,814.09 out of the \$250,000 available through its Memorandum of Understanding with the



Department of Liquor and Lottery. These funds supported critical initiatives, including:

- Establishing a Vermont-specific Problem Gambling Helpline and launching VtGamblingHelp.org, providing comprehensive resources for individuals and families.
- Expanding and strengthening the Problem Gambling Provider Network, ensuring a trained and accessible workforce to support Vermonters in need.
- Initiating foundational steps for clinician training and certificate programs to enhance statewide treatment capacity.

These efforts are critical to building a comprehensive and accessible system to support player health and to prevent and address problem gambling in the state. With a clear trajectory toward fully utilizing the \$500,000 SFY25 budget, the program is well-positioned to continue advancing and expanding these important initiatives in the coming year.



Department of Mental Health Problem Gambling Program and Expenditures – State Fiscal Year 2024

Budget Category	Funding Source	Spent
Helpline, including technology	DLL MOU	19,249.98
Peer Specialist Support (Telephone Peer Support)	DLL MOU	4,999.98
Website: VtGamblingHelp.org	DLL MOU	2,398.22
Training and Certificate Program	DLL MOU	5,001.00
MACGH Admin Fee: 10%	DLL MOU	3,164.91
Responsible Gaming Program Coordinator; position filled May 20 th , 2024	Off-contract (DMH)	9,046.00
Problem Gambling Awareness Month expenses (UVM tabling, promotional items)	Off-contract (DMH)	297.53
Indirects	Off-contract (DMH)	431.73
Totals	Total DLL MOU for SFY24: 34,814.09 Total off-contract (DMH-paid) for SFY24: 9,775.26	Total SFY24: 44,589.35

