

**Impacting Communities**  
Through Awareness,  
Empowerment, & Support

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**MARYLAND CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**FISCAL YEAR 2025 ANNUAL REPORT  
JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025**



**UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

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## Center Staff

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**Christopher Welsh, MD**

Medical Director

UMSOM Faculty

**Robert K. White, LCPC**

Director of External Affairs and  
Business Development

**Mary Drexler, MSW**

FY 2025 Program Director

**Jessica P. Brown, PhD**

Director of Research

UMSOM Faculty

**Ahmed Al-Hadidi, MPH**

Clinical Research Specialist

**Kristen Beall, LCSW-C, ICGC-II, CAC-AD**

Clinical Manager

**Michael Kafes**

Communications Manager

**Heather Eshleman, MPH**

Prevention Manager

FY 2026 Program Director

**Brina Olunkwa, MPH**

Prevention Coordinator

**Davene Hinton, MBA**

Training Coordinator

**Katrina Davis, MHRM**

Business Manager

**Blair Inniss, JD, MA**

Government Affairs Manager

**Francina Benjamin**

Program Assistant

**Kenneth Wolfson, CPRS, RPS**

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**William Hinman, CPRS, CRC, RPS**

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**Kenneth Crawford, CPRS, CRC**

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**James Nowlin, CPRS**

(Retired)

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**Carin Miller, CPRS, CRC**

Certified Peer Recovery Specialist

**Anthony Parente,**

**MA, LCPC, NCC, MAC, ICGC II, BACC**

Consultant



Since July 1, 2012, the Center has focused on minimizing the risks and harms associated with gambling in Maryland. In those 13 years, we have prioritized educating Maryland residents about the risks associated with gambling activities and providing services that support those suffering from the negative impacts and harms of excessive gambling.

In FY 2025, the Center also monitored and testified on proposed gambling legislation, expanded its outreach to behavioral health and community organizations, and provided flexible training options both virtually and in-person. The Center's Peer Recovery Support Specialists supported 613 Maryland residents, and the Prevention Program nearly doubled its number of grantees from 28 to 48 which strengthened statewide prevention capacity.

## **FY 2026 Goals:**

Our goals for FY 2026 include:

- Deliver links to services through the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline and peer recovery support for individuals with a gambling disorder and their family members.
- Continue monitoring gambling-related legislation in Maryland.
- Broaden outreach to behavioral health providers, community organizations, and academic institutions to strengthen service and grant capacity.
- Increase awareness of problem gambling among the most at-risk populations through peer, prevention, and public outreach initiatives.
- Expand the Center's ability to provide clinical assistance to the behavioral health system.
- Grow the number of providers offering no-cost treatment services in underserved areas.
- Further develop the Center's research agenda on problem gambling.

With the expertise of Center staff and strong statewide partnerships, we remain committed to ensuring that Maryland residents understand the potential risks of gambling and know where to turn for help. Lastly, I wish to convey a heartfelt thank you to the Center's staff, both past and present, and to all of the professional organizations and providers who support the Center's mission. Your efforts and services are appreciated!

Sincerely,

*Heather Eshleman*  
Heather Eshleman, MPH  
Director of Operations



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling (the Center) is a program of the University of Maryland School of Medicine, funded by the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration. The Center promotes healthy and informed choices regarding gambling and problem gambling through public awareness, training and education, prevention, technical assistance to the behavioral health care system, peer recovery support, research, and public policy. It does so by working closely with appropriate state stakeholders and bringing together experts from a variety of disciplines including psychiatry, medicine, epidemiology, social work, law and others.

# PUBLIC AWARENESS

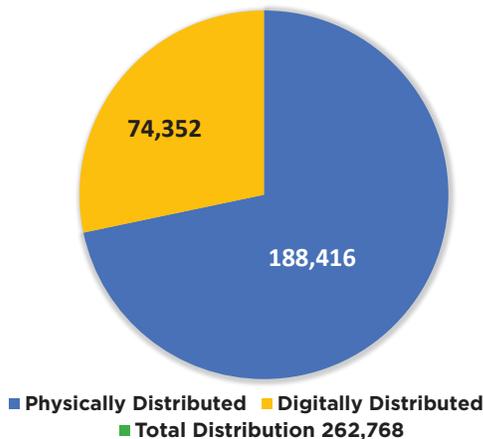
If a Maryland resident experiences gambling-related harm, the Center’s mission is to ensure easy access to statewide resources through digital and physical platforms, including websites, social media, and traditional advertising partnerships. When implemented together, these awareness advertising efforts consistently show an increase in Helpline calls, chats, and texts.

## AWARENESS MEDIA AND DISTRIBUTION

The Center provides free problem gambling information and materials to Maryland residents. Most resources are shared through behavioral health providers, community organizations, and other professionals who support individuals affected by potential gambling harms. We also reach the public directly at major community events, including the B-more Healthy Expo, Money Power Day, and the Power of Age Expo.

To help Marylanders make healthy and informed choices, the Center runs positive awareness campaigns for the general public, young adults, and others who may be at higher risk.

### FY 2025 PHYSICAL & DIGITAL AWARENESS DISTRIBUTION



## FREE RESOURCES & MATERIALS

Scan the QR Code to begin your order

Problem Gambling Awareness

FY 2025 CAMPAIGN EFFORTS
Youth and college-aged social media
Social media and search
Streaming TV and digital display
Geo-fencing and retargeting
<b>Get the Facts 2.0</b>
TV, radio, transit, and billboards
Geo-fencing and search
Sports teams and sports outlets
<b>Docuseries - Winning Back My Life</b>
Google search and video display
TV, digital display and social media
Geo-fencing and retargeting
Movie theater preshow (advertising)

## Email Distribution



The Center sent **36** emails reaching **3,911** unique subscribers totaling **90,975** emails across all campaigns. Over half of all emails were opened. Approximately **7,000** resources were downloaded from emails.

The Center distributes email updates on prevention and awareness, calls to action, free training and continuing education opportunities, and public policy developments. To stay informed about the Center’s initiatives, visit [www.MDproblemGambling.com/Join](http://www.MDproblemGambling.com/Join)

## DIGITAL MANAGEMENT

### WEBSITES

The Center currently maintains three websites. The Center’s main website provides general information on public awareness, trainings, and basic facts on problem gambling. The Help Seeker website

provides information and resources for help with a gambling disorder. Whether you are a public health professional or an inquisitive Maryland resident, the main website provides people with information and services provided by the Center. The Help Seeker site is dedicated to providing anyone who wants information, help, and/or resources for themselves or their loved ones who may be experiencing a gambling problem.

In February, the Center launched a new awareness campaign featuring a gambling recovery docuseries. These short form documentaries share four



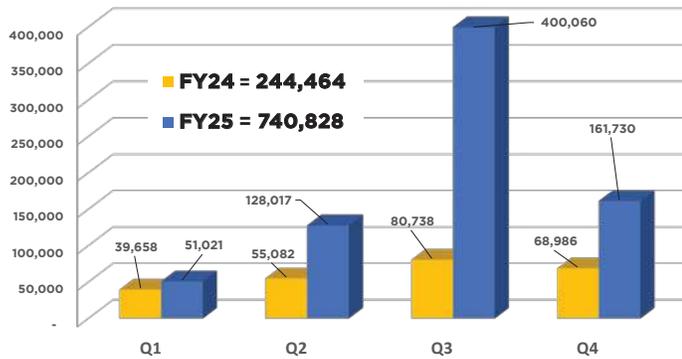
## → know when to stop →



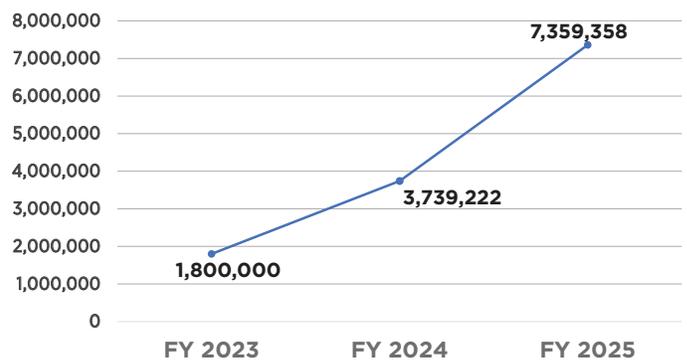
stories of people in recovery and their family members. It aims to reduce the stigma of seeking help for gambling addiction. The campaign maintains its own website where viewers can watch videos and find additional information.

## A DOCUMENTARY SERIES NEARLY LOSING EVERYTHING IS JUST THE BEGINNING [WinningBackMyLife.com](http://WinningBackMyLife.com)

**QUARTERLY WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS (FY24 vs FY25)**



**SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS YEAR-OVER-YEAR**



### PAID SOCIAL MEDIA

*This years paid search and social media campaign delivered 25.4 Million total impressions that drove over 236,700 people to the Center's Websites and social media landing pages. This aided in the increase of organic engagements.*

### UNPAID SOCIAL MEDIA

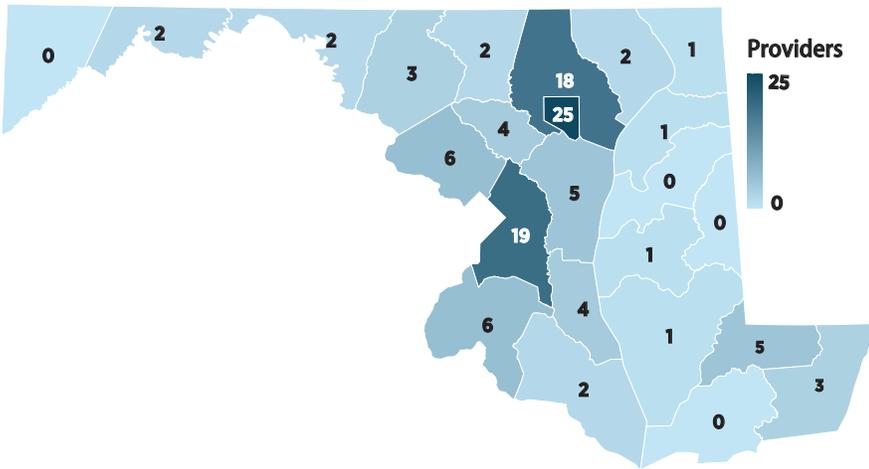
The Center continued to see an 11% growth rate across all social media platforms. To date, 277 new individuals joined the 2,474 group of total subscribers. 908 problem gambling related awareness posts reached over 7 Million users, generating 32,869 engagements.

# TREATMENT & INTERVENTION

The Center provides ongoing presentations to providers and private practitioners across the state. The Center's leadership continues to meet monthly with BHA and the State's Administrative Services Organization (ASO) to discuss any potential consultation and technical assistance needed by the ASO to ensure services provided by Maryland clinicians through the State's Problem Gambling Fund are reimbursed in a timely manner. This updated Directory of Providers for no cost treatment continues to be maintained by the Center.

By the year's end, treatment for disordered gambling was being offered at 134 locations in 21 jurisdictions (including Telehealth Only) by 119 unique providers (12 providers have multiple locations). Carelon, the new Administrative Services Organization (ASO) in Maryland, hosted drop-in sessions and a training opportunity regarding the reimbursement process for providers of gambling treatment.

## PROBLEM GAMBLING NO-COST TREATMENT PROVIDERS



## PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH

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2,467

*Total Outreach*

The Center continues to outreach to providers, private practitioners, and Professional organizations across the state

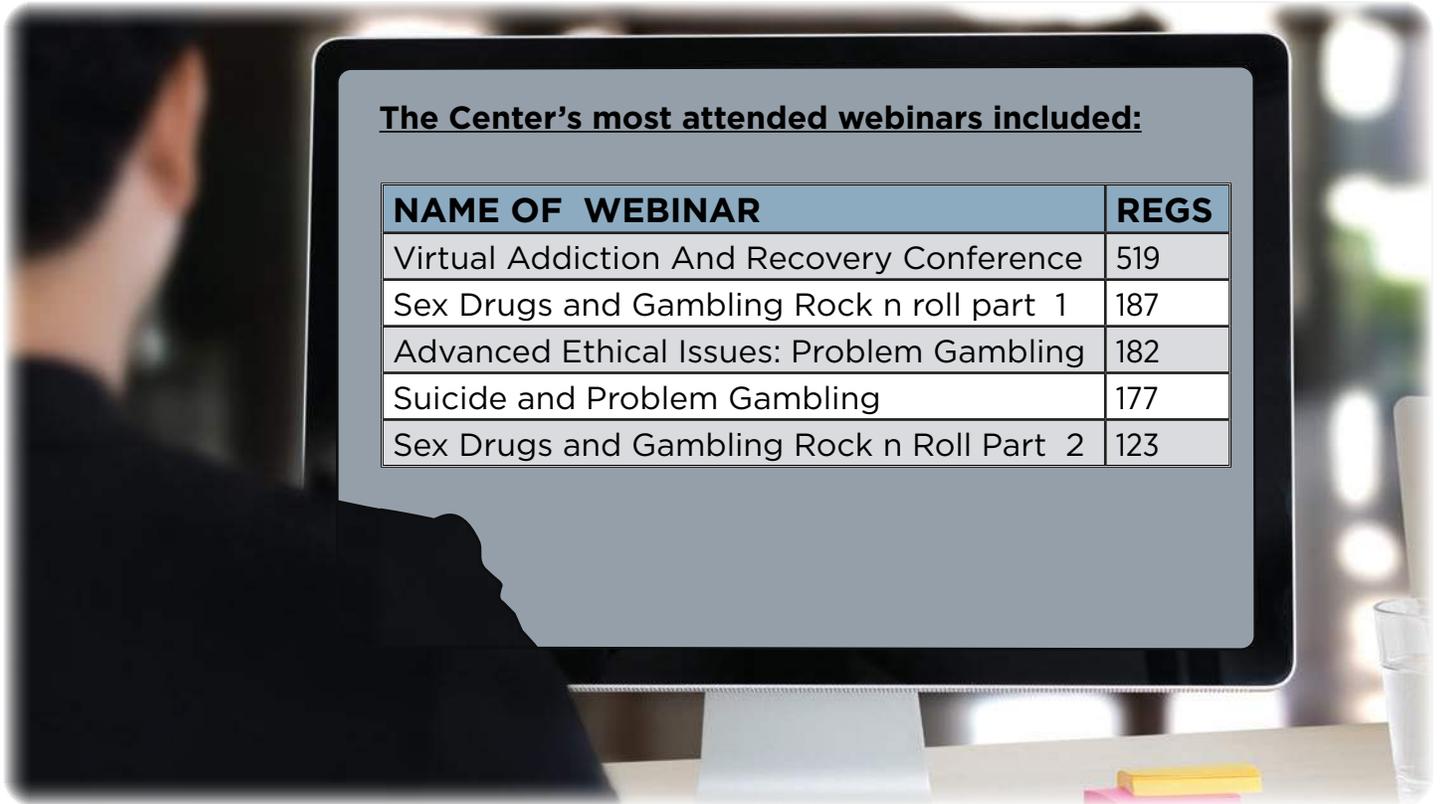


The Center continues to engage the criminal justice system to promote court-mandated referrals to problem gambling treatment for individuals whose offenses are associated with gambling disorder. Staff attended the 20th Annual Problem-Solving Courts Symposium, connecting with at least **100** attendees from drug courts across the State and distributing **232** materials and give aways.



The training program is an integral part of the Center’s work, providing behavioral health organizations, private practitioners, schools, and other organizations with opportunities to strengthen competencies in supporting and treating individuals and families affected by problem gambling.

The Center’s trainings hosted more than 4,100 attendees. During the year, webinars, in-person trainings, college and university trainings, and trainings specific to Departments of Social Services were delivered.



### The Center’s most attended webinars included:

NAME OF WEBINAR	REGS
Virtual Addiction And Recovery Conference	519
Sex Drugs and Gambling Rock n roll part 1	187
Advanced Ethical Issues: Problem Gambling	182
Suicide and Problem Gambling	177
Sex Drugs and Gambling Rock n Roll Part 2	123

The Center’s 12th Annual Joanna Franklin Conference on Problem Gambling, themed “Impacting Communities Through Awareness, Empowerment, and Support”, was held on June 13, 2025 at Turf Valley Resort. **475** people attended the conference, hearing from national speakers on emerging trends in problem gambling and from those with lived experience featured in the Center’s new docuseries “Winning Back My Life”.

“The Intersection of Gambling and Domestic Violence: Empowering Survivors” was first presented by the Center’s Clinical Manager at the National Council on Problem Gambling’s (NCPG) Annual Conference in July 2024. This presentation received strong national interest and was subsequently delivered to multiple state councils and affiliates, and featured on “All In: The Addicted Gambler’s Podcast”.

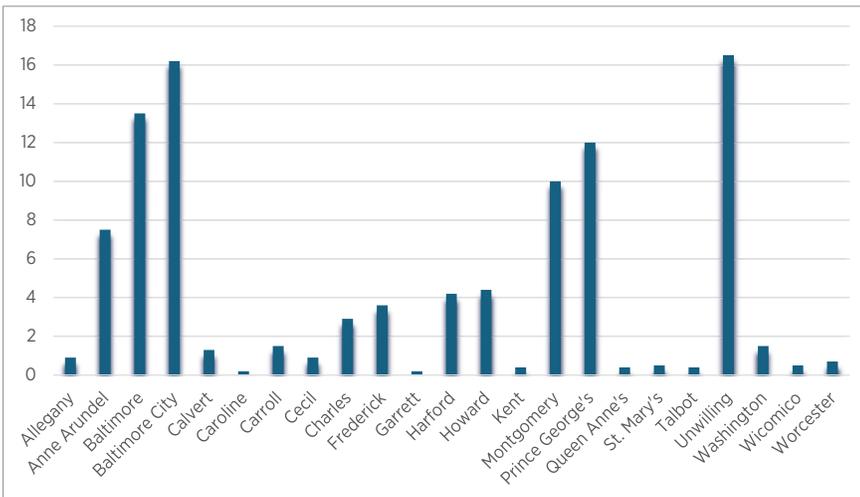
The Center continued to provide trainings to behavioral health providers across the State. The Center’s Peers presented to clients in substance use treatment centers. Offering in-service presentations throughout Maryland expands the awareness of the potential harms associated with gambling, the importance of incorporating an evidence-based gambling screening tool, and having regular conversations with people in their community about gambling responsibly. Additionally, they offer an opportunity to connect the people they serve with the Center’s resources and support; such as materials for their offices and lobbies as well as connection to one of the Center’s Peers.

# HELPLINE INTAKES

In FY 2025, the Helpline received 1,394 contacts, including calls, chats, and texts. Texts and chats accounted for 53.7% (n=749), while phone calls made up 46.3% (n=645). Of the chats and texts, 36.8% (n = 276) resulted in intakes. As requested by BHA, the Center only details monthly chat and text intake data; therefore, the figures below reflect completed intakes rather than all Help Seeker interactions.



## GAMBLING PROBLEM? 1-800-GAMBLER

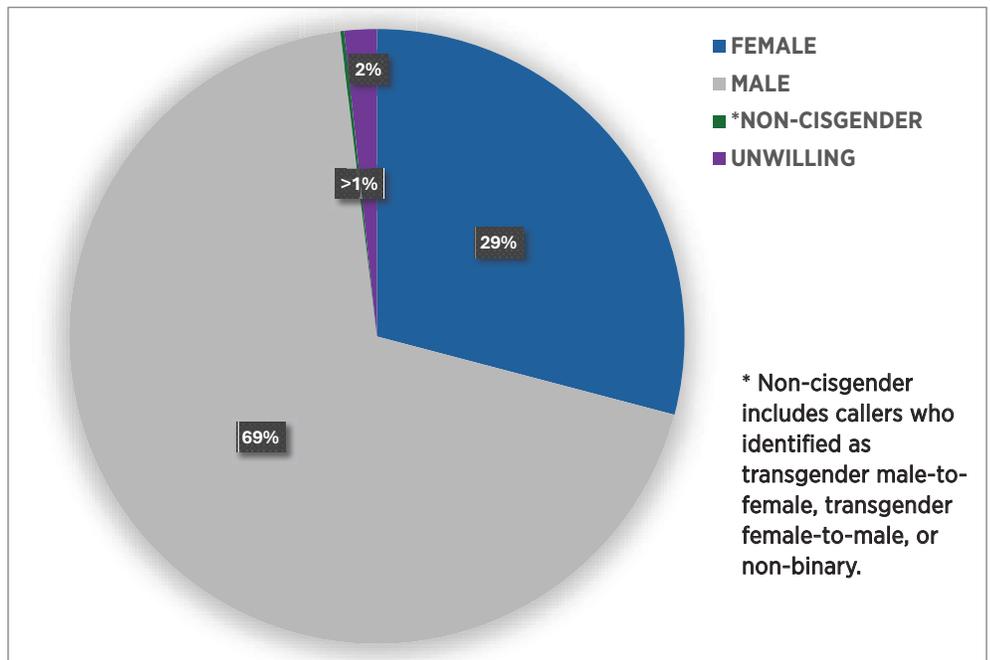


### PERCENTAGE OF CALLERS BY JURISDICTION

Helpline callers reported from 23 jurisdictions. The Central and Southern regions of Maryland accounted for the largest proportions, with 32.6% (n = 210) and 20.6% (n = 133) of calls, respectively. The Western and Eastern regions accounted for 15.2% (n = 98) and 2.9% (n = 19). The remaining 28.7% (n = 185) of callers resided outside Maryland (14.7% n = 95) or were unwilling to share their location (14.0% n = 90).

### GENDER

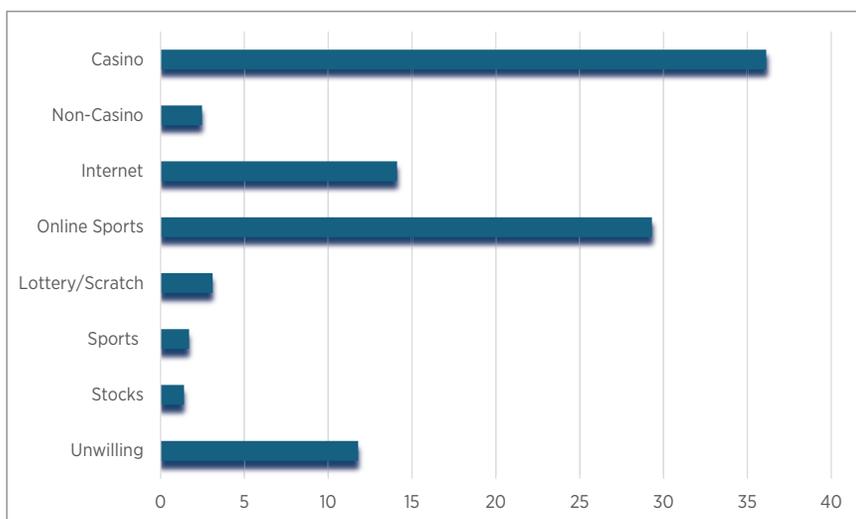
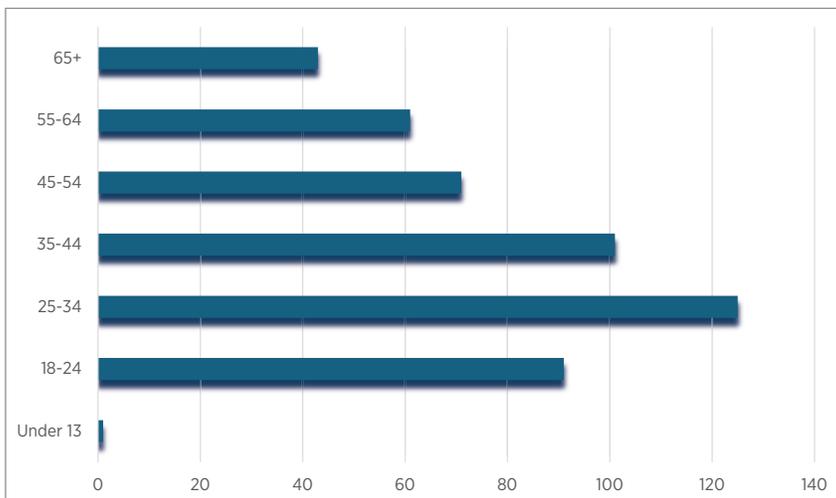
Male callers continue to outnumber female callers, comprising 69.0% (n = 445) of total calls compared to 29.1% (n = 188) from female callers. Additionally, fewer than 1% (n = 1) of callers identified as non-cisgender and 1.7% (n = 11) were unwilling to disclose their gender.





## NUMBER OF HELPLINE CALLERS BY AGE GROUP

The most frequently reported age groups in FY 2025 were 25-34 years (19.4%, n = 125) and 35-44 years (15.7%, n = 101). Callers aged 18-24 followed at 14.1% (n = 91). Just over one-tenth of callers were between 45-54 years old (11.0%, n = 71), while those aged 55-64 made up 9.5% (n = 61), and individuals 65 and older accounted for 6.7% (n = 43). Only one caller was under the age of 13 and 23.6% (n = 152) declined to disclose their age.



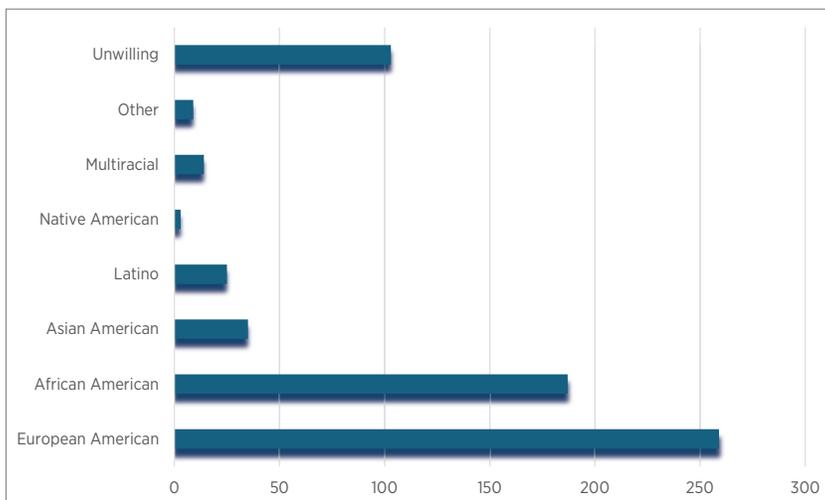
## PRIMARY GAMBLING PROBLEM BY PERCENTAGE

Casino-based gambling remains the most frequently reported primary gambling problem among FY 2025 helpline callers, accounting for 36.1% (n = 233) of calls. Among these, slots were the most popular game, representing 43.3% (n = 101) of calls. Online sports betting was the second most common reported issue, comprising 29.3% (n = 189) of calls. This was followed by internet gambling (excluding sports) at 14.1% (n = 91), Lottery or Scratch at 3.1% (n = 20), non-Casino gambling at 2.5%

(n = 16), non-online sports betting at 1.7% (n = 11), and stocks at 1.4% (n = 9). Nearly 12% (n = 76) of callers chose not to disclose their primary gambling problem.

## NUMBER OF HELPLINE CALLERS BY ETHNICITY

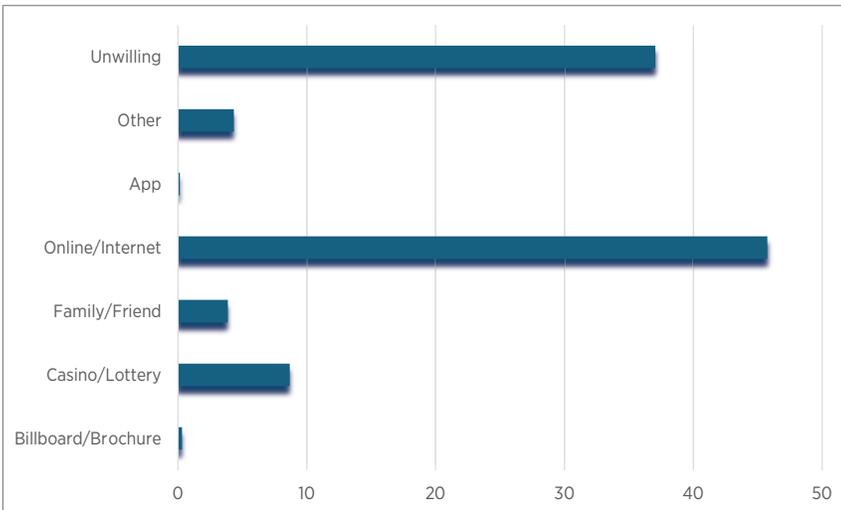
The largest proportion of FY 2025 Helpline callers identified as European American (40.2%, n = 259), followed by African American callers (29.0%, n = 187).



# HELPLINE INTAKES

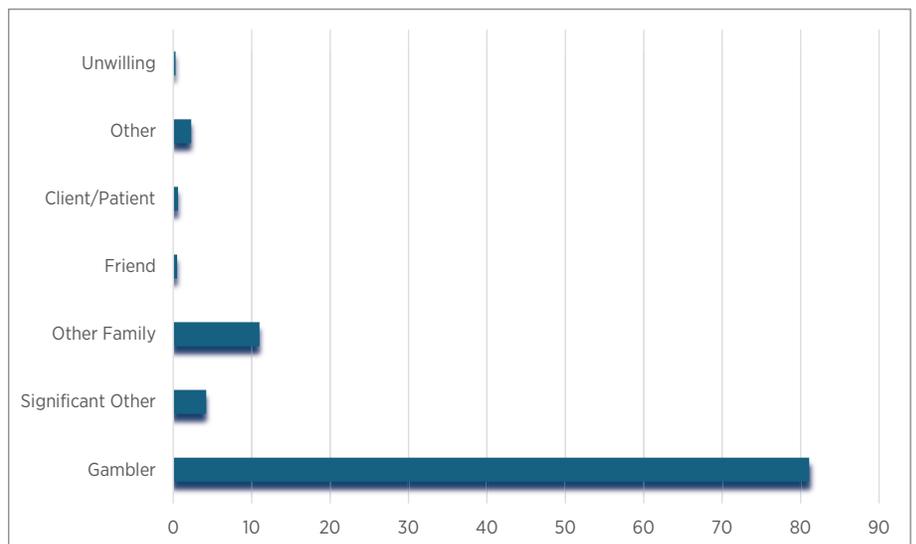
## WHERE CALLERS LEARNED OF HELPLINE BY PERCENTAGE

Callers most frequently reported the internet as their primary source for connecting to the helpline (45.7%, n = 295), followed by casinos and lotteries as a secondary source (8.7%, n = 56).



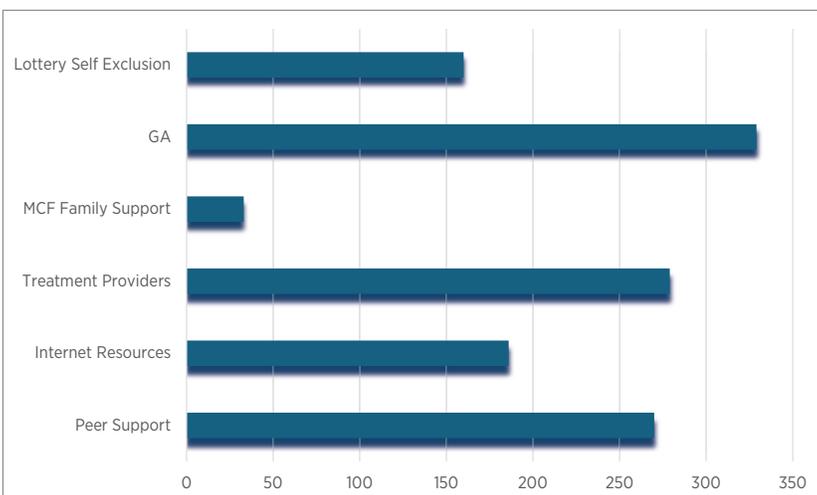
## PERSON WHO IS CALLING BY PERCENTAGE

The majority of Helpline callers identified as gamblers in FY 2025, comprising 81.1% (n = 523) of all calls. Family members accounted for 11.0% (n = 71), and significant others made up 4.2% (n = 27). The remaining callers included those categorized as other (2.3%, n = 15), clients or patients (0.6%, n = 4), and those unwilling to disclose their relationship (0.3%, n = 2).



## NUMBER OF HELPLINE REFERRALS

In FY 2025, 86.8% of helpline callers (n = 560) accepted one or more referrals. Referrals to Center Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists were made in 41.9% of calls (n = 270), with 42.6% of those (n = 115) involving a warm transfer (real-time transfer with callers on the line) for immediate Peer support. Gamblers Anonymous (GA) referrals comprised 51.0% (n = 329), followed by referrals to treatment providers offering no-cost treatment (43.3%, n = 279). Internet-based resources accounted for 28.8% (n = 186), and the lottery self-exclusion program made up



24.8% (n = 160). Lastly, 5.1% of callers (n = 33) were referred to Family Peer Support at the Maryland Coalition of Families.



Prevention strategies focus on individuals who do not currently show signs of a gambling problem. In FY 2025, the Center’s Prevention Program focused on capacity building and expanding the number of special population and college/university grants serving Maryland’s emerging adults and underserved populations through strategic partnerships with grantees.



## OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

The Prevention Program engaged **161** community organizations, including **43** new partners, through presentations, exhibits, and community events. A total of **4,728** individuals participated, and **98** material requests resulted in the distribution of **65,890** printed resources.

### Higher Education Prevention Initiative

All **55** Maryland colleges and universities were invited to participate in FY 2025 prevention trainings, with **176** individuals attending in-person or virtual sessions. A young adult social media survey and dedicated campaign landing page supported tailored outreach to this population.

### Social Services Training Initiative

The Prevention Office established direct contacts with DHS and local DSS offices statewide to promote problem gambling prevention training. A total of **157** social services staff completed in-person or virtual training sessions.

### Legislative Collaboration

Prevention staff supported the passage of **SB 310**, adding problem gambling prevention to Maryland’s high school suicide prevention curriculum. The Center provided testimony, data, and cross-state references to support legislative decision-making.

## Y25 PREVENTION GRANTS AWARDED

### College & University Grantees

Grants were awarded across a diverse set of higher education partners, including

- HBCUs – 5
- Public Universities – 4
- Community Colleges – 3
- Private Colleges – 3
- Non-funded Collaborators – 3

### Special Population Grantees

- Behavioral/Mental Health Orgs – 11
- Youth Development Programs – 9
- Cultural/Immigrant-Service Orgs – 4
- Faith-Based Organizations – 1
- Health Dept/Government Orgs – 3
- Professional / Advocacy Groups – 3

FY 2025 PREVENTION GRANTEE STRATEGY TOTALS		
	Special Populations	Colleges/ Universities
Number Reached		
Through Outreach	32,445	10,811
Through Social Media	62,090	19,026
People Trained	174	80
People Screened	300	277
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>95,009</b>	<b>30,194</b>

# PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT

Since 2018, the Center's Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialists have supported individuals in reducing or eliminating harms associated with problem gambling. The Peer role focuses on connecting people seeking help with gambling-related concerns to appropriate resources within their communities. Initial contact between Peers and individuals seeking support typically occurs through the problem gambling helpline (1-800-GAMBLER) or during group presentations at behavioral health facilities.

## WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING ABOUT THE CENTER'S PEERS?

*"I am so pleased with Will. He is so understanding. I feel like I can speak with him about anything. He always responds."*

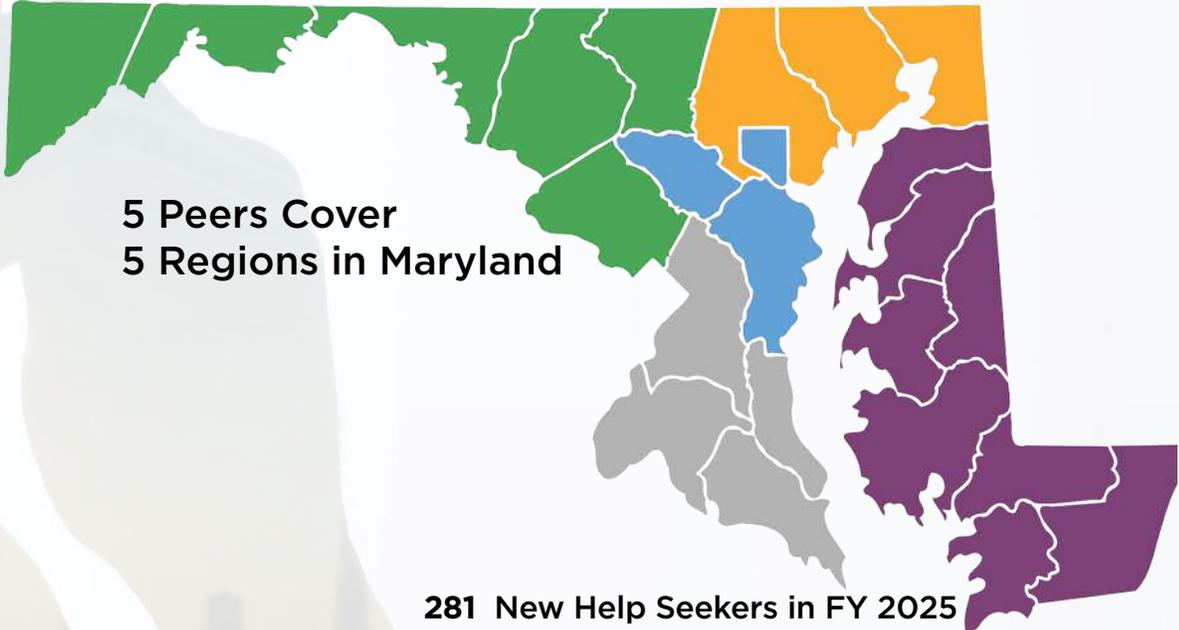
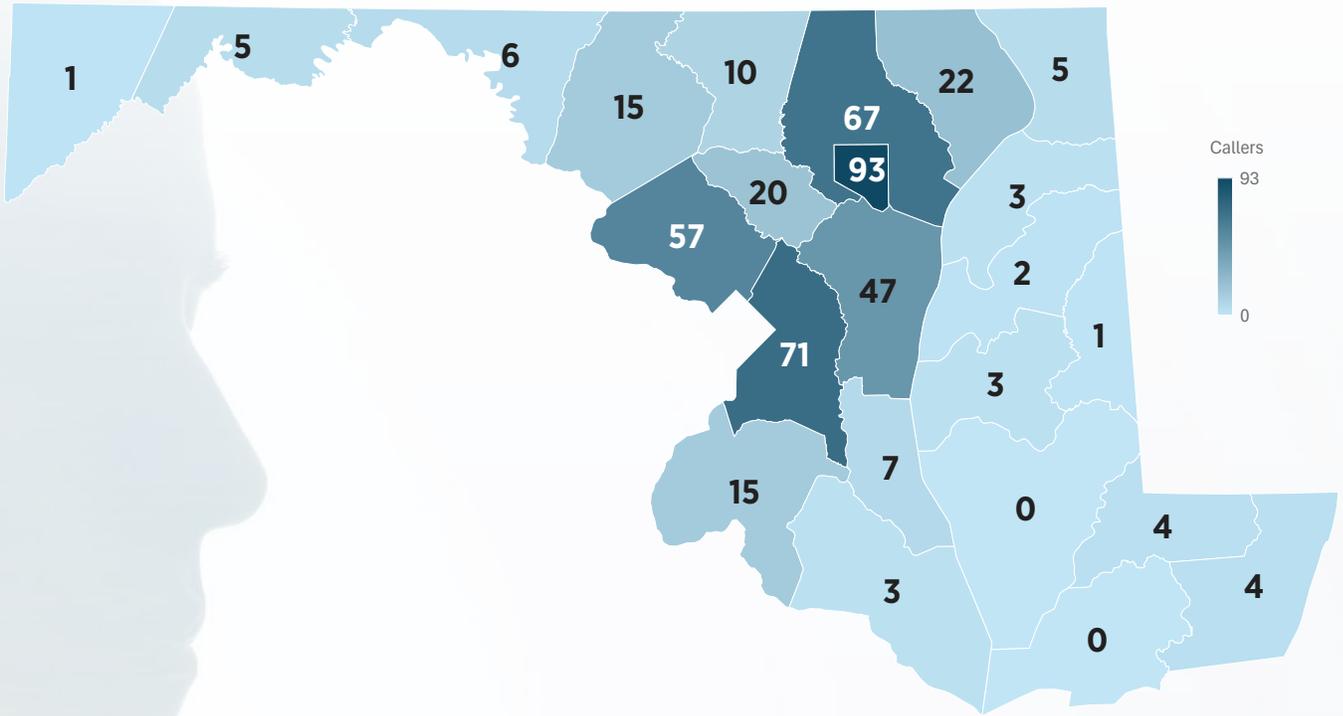
*"I like the daily reflections, they really helped me. When I think I don't need one, my peer always shows up at the right time."*

*"Carin is always kind, supportive, and knowledgeable. She understands addiction and gives just the right balance of frankness and love in her advice and guidance."*

*"I just wanted to let you know that I hit my one-year mark last week and it is really amazing how different my life is today from what it was one year ago! Thank you for all your help!"*

*"I am incredibly grateful that Ken took the time to talk with me the day I decided I no longer wanted to gamble and to help guide me on my journey to a life without addiction. The Center and the Peer program has changed my life!!"*

# HELPLINE CALLERS BY COUNTY



**5 Peers Cover  
5 Regions in Maryland**

**281 New Help Seekers in FY 2025**  
**613<sup>1</sup> Total Help Seekers Served**  
**25% Of all calls were transferred directly to a Peer**

<sup>1</sup> Changes to active client classification has resulted in a decrease in the total number of Help Seekers served moving forward

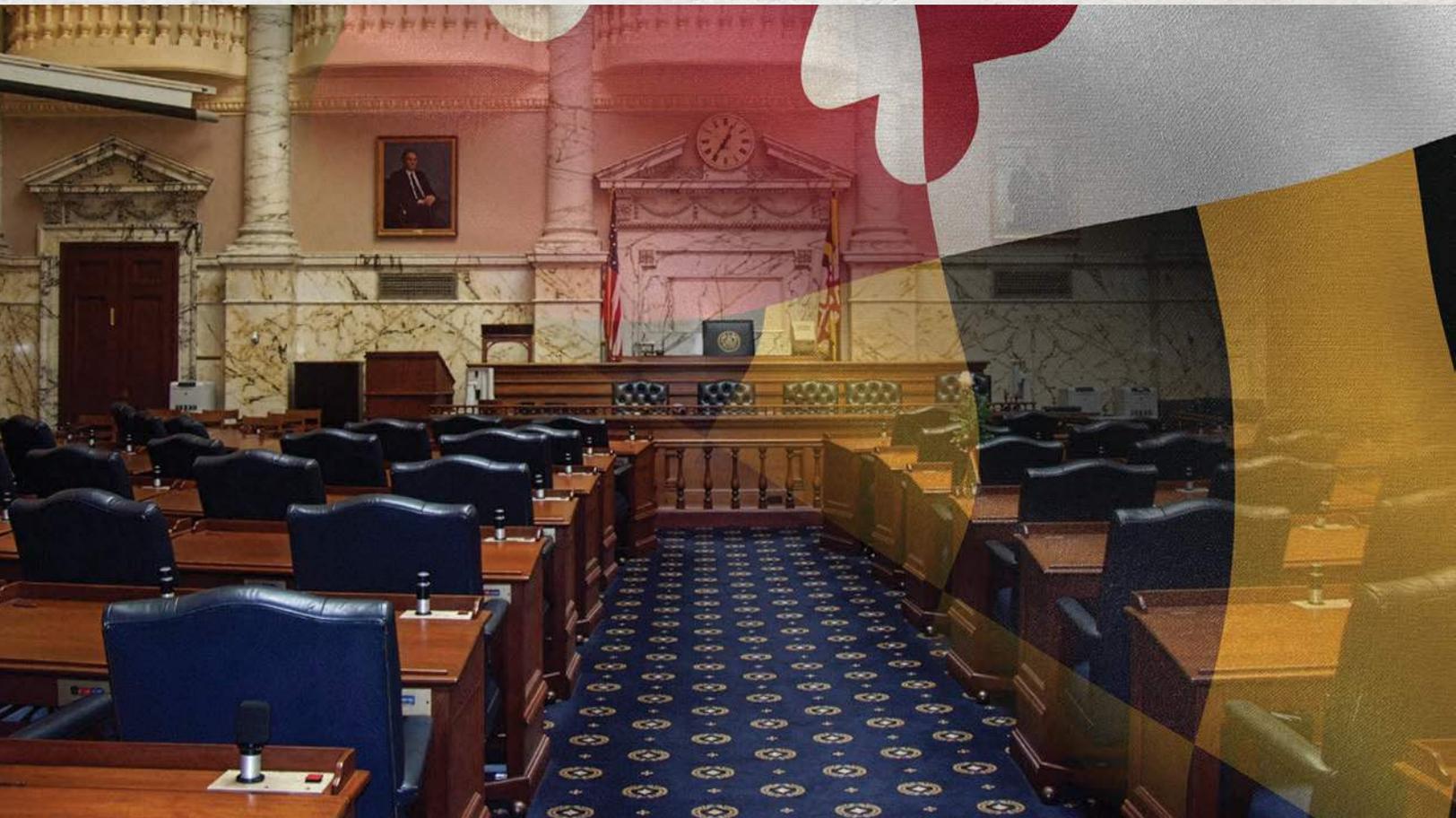
# PUBLIC POLICY

The Center continued to monitor proposed gambling legislation in Maryland during the Maryland General Assembly session. The Center tracked a total of 40 bills referencing gambling introduced in the House and Senate, provided written and oral testimony in Annapolis, created and updated a real-time legislative tracking document to two listservs reaching more than 800 registrants, and held bi-weekly calls to discuss prominent public health legislation.

## BILLS OF NOTE

- **SB 310 - Education - Youth Suicide Prevention School Program**  
Adds awareness of the relationship between gambling and youth suicide to the Youth Suicide Prevention School Program.  
This bill passed and became effective July 1, 2025.  
**PASSED**
- **HB 618 State Lottery - Internet Sales of Subscription Plans - Authorization**  
Establishes a system or program that allows for the purchase of a State Lottery Subscription through the internet.  
This bill passed and became effective July 1, 2025.  
**PASSED**
- **SB 340/ HB 17 Internet Gaming - Authorization and Implementation**  
Creates an authorization and implementation plan for iGaming. describes how iGaming funds should be distributed to local jurisdictions to fund education; clarifies how the remaining proceeds will be distributed, including 1% to the Problem Gambling Fund  
**DID NOT PASS**

**The Center continues to monitor all gambling-related legislation to promote responsible gambling practices and minimize potential harms.**



## Partners

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### PUBLIC AWARENESS

#### **G3GROUP AGENCY, LLC**

**Anita Schott**  
CEO

**John E. Pusey**  
Director, Development & Hosting

**Tammy Vinson Schott**  
Project Manager

#### **RED HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS**

**Cliff Rankin**  
Senior V.P.

**Justin Clawson**  
Director of Creative Production

**Dan Filipek**  
Account Director

### POLICY

#### **NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE OF MARYLAND (NCADD-MD)**

**Nancy Rosen-Cohen, PhD**  
Executive Director

**Ann T. Ciekot**  
Partner, Public Policy Partners

#### **UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND FRANCIS KING CAREY SCHOOL OF LAW**

**Kathleen Hoke, JD**  
Law School Professor

Director, Network for Public  
Health Law, Eastern Region,

Director, Legal Resource Center  
for Public Health Policy

### PREVENTION

#### **MARYLAND COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING (MCPG)**

**Dr. Shandra Parks, PhD, LMSW,  
CFSW**  
President

**Deborah G. Haskins,  
PhD, LCPC, ACS, MAC, ICGC II**  
President Emerita

## Acknowledgments

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Maryland Department of Health (MDH)  
Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)  
Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF)  
Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control  
Agency (MLGCA)  
Maryland Alliance for Responsible Gam-  
bling (MARG)  
Maryland Association of Prevention Profes-  
sionals & Advocates (MAPPA)  
National Council on Problem Gambling  
(NCPG)  
Optum Maryland (Optum)



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Maryland Center *of* Excellence  
*on* Problem Gambling

**250 West Pratt Street Suite #1050  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
667-214-2120**

 [www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org](http://www.HelpMyGamblingProblem.org)

 [www.mdProblemGambling.com](http://www.mdProblemGambling.com)

**MARYLAND HELPLINE: 1-800-GAMBLER**