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Massachusetts Gaming Commission Awards City of Springfield with Grant to Study Youth Impacts of Gambling

Grant Will Build on Springfield's Gambling Addiction Research Initiative, Formerly the Youth Adult Gambling Project

During a public meeting of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (Commission), commissioners voted to award the City of Springfield with a \$275,000 grant intended to help understand and address gambling-related harm among youth. This grant was awarded as part of the Commission's Community Mitigation Fund, which makes grants to support communities in offsetting impact costs related to the construction and operation of gaming facilities.

The Commission added community-based research to projects eligible for Community Mitigation Fund grants as a pilot last year. During that funding cycle, the City of Springfield was awarded funding for the inaugural study, the Springfield Young Adult Gambling Project, which seeks to better understand the gambling behavior of Springfield's young adults. Initial funding was used to develop a partnership among a youth advisory board, public health professionals, and researchers to plan the study.

The \$275,000 grant awarded Thursday will help fund this important research partnership and help gain a first-hand view of factors related to problem gambling among youth, which is critical to informing prevention and treatment efforts.

"Understanding the gambling-related harms experienced by young people will have a direct impact on strategies developed to prevent and mitigate those harms in the future," said **Interim Chair Jordan Maynard**. "Working directly with engaged young people in Springfield will help researchers and the Commission fully understand the impacts of gambling on this population and lead to additional programs designed to mitigate potential harms."

The awarded funds will be used to engage in research efforts including digital storytelling and crowdsourcing. Digital storytelling is a qualitative research methodology useful to action and social justice-focused public health efforts. Individuals participate in a group-based workshop that provides the training, tools, and resources for participants to create digital stories and feel empowered as storytellers of their experiences.



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“Digital storytelling can provide a safe space for participants to share their experiences and narratives around challenging topic, like gambling,” said Helen Caulton-Harris **Commissioner of Springfield Department of Health and Human Services**. “This will provide a space that values lived expertise from marginalized communities to share their own stories.”

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission has the most comprehensive regulator-supported research program in the country, and this Community Mitigation Fund initiative builds significantly upon its robust community-engaged research program. Community-based participatory research focuses on addressing inequities through the active involvement of community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process. Partners contribute their expertise to enhance understanding of a given phenomenon and integrate the knowledge gained with action to benefit the community involved.

Springfield’s initiative is expected to serve as a model for other communities facing similar challenges, demonstrating the power of community-based research and collaboration in creating impactful solutions. This year the Commission saw an increase in applications to study youth gambling, as grants were awarded in Boston, Medford, and Melrose in addition to Springfield.

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