



**Pennsylvania Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee
Informational Hearing on Compulsive and Problem
Gambling Programs in the Commonwealth
February 3, 2009**

Good morning Chairwoman Earll, Chairman Fontana, Members of the Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee and staff. My name is Everette James, Acting Secretary of Health for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the status of the Pennsylvania Department of Health's efforts to establish a comprehensive and effective problem gambling program for the citizens of this commonwealth. The Department recognizes that problem and compulsive gambling poses a significant public health risk. The experience of other jurisdictions has been that these health issues can be mitigated with the implementation of an effective public education, services and treatment campaign. To that end, I would like to voice the Department's support for Senate Resolution 10. Certainly, we look forward to working with this Committee and the Gaming Control Board to make March a successful "Problem Gambling Awareness Month." I have asked Janice Kopelman, Deputy Secretary for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and Robin Rothermel, the Director for the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs to join me today to provide you information and to answer any specific questions you may have. Going forward, you have my commitment to carry out these programs in an effective manner to confront the public health issues that arise from problem gambling.

Act 71 – Overview of Components

Good morning, my name is Janice Kopelman and I am the Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. Our Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs is responsible for implementing the statewide gambling prevention and treatment programs. First, I would like to commend the General Assembly for recognizing the need for the public health entity of the commonwealth, the Department of Health, to lead the response to

compulsive and problem gambling. Through Act 71 of 2004, "The Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act," the legislature outlined the Compulsive and Problem Gambling Program in Section 1509. Under this section, the responsibility was given to the Department to develop program guidelines for public education, awareness and training in regard to compulsive and problem gambling, as well as to provide for the treatment and prevention of compulsive and problem gambling. Consisting of four (4) components, this section includes the establishment of an effective program, an adequate treatment fund, a consistent notice of the availability of assistance and the utilization of the Single County Authorities (SCAs).

Today, I will update you on what the Department has done in order to implement each of its outlined responsibilities under Act 71. To do so, I will first briefly address the latter three components of Section 1509: the compulsive and problem gambling treatment fund, the consistent notice of the availability of assistance and the utilization of single county authorities (SCAs).

Section 1509 (B) – Compulsive and Problem Gambling Treatment Fund

The Compulsive and Problem Gambling Treatment Fund was established in Section 1509 (B) and each year receives the sum of \$1,500,000, or an amount equal to 0.1 percent multiplied by the total gross terminal revenue of all active and operating licensed gaming entities, whichever is greater. Any unutilized funds in a given fiscal year remain available to the Department in subsequent years. Currently, there is approximately \$4.9 million in the Compulsive and Problem Gambling Treatment Fund, and approximately \$500,000 has been expended on gambling related activities including training, hotline services, print material and treatment.

Section 1509 (C) – Notice of Availability of Assistance

Notice of the availability of assistance requires that each slot machine licensee obtain a toll-free telephone number and post signs informing patrons of the number and its available services. In

addition, each racetrack in which slot machines are operated must include information about a toll-free telephone number on its daily racing programs. License-holders who fail to comply with this section must pay a fine of \$1,000 per day, which is enforced by the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board.

Section 1509 (D) – Single County Authorities

The Department currently uses a network of 49 Single County Authorities to provide drug and alcohol prevention, treatment and intervention services throughout the Commonwealth. The General Assembly references the Single County Authorities as entities to which the Department may make funds available to provide compulsive gambling and gambling addiction prevention, treatment and education programs. Utilization of services would presumably be highest in Pennsylvania counties with gambling facilities. However, many counties in Pennsylvania border, or are located near, out-of-state gambling facilities. For example, a problem gambling treatment provider in Western Pennsylvania reports that one local client was traveling to gamble in West Virginia. Likewise, Cameron-Elk-McKean's SCA have reported an elevated number of cases involving gambling problems due to their proximity to a New York gaming center. Therefore, in order to allow for flexibility in allocating resources, the Department decided to utilize Participating Provider Agreements (PPAs) during the initial start-up of the treatment and for the counseling reimbursement component.

Section 1509 (B) – Compulsive and Problem Gambling Program

The establishment of a Compulsive and Problem Gambling Program (Program) within Section 1509 is the largest and most detailed segment of Act 71. The Act requires the Department, in consultation with other organizations, such as the National Council on Problem Gambling and the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania (CCGP), to develop program guidelines for public education, awareness and training, as well as the treatment and prevention of

compulsive and problem gambling. The Department also consulted with several states that have problem gambling programs in order to obtain information.

As part of the establishment of the Program, the General Assembly specifically addressed six (6) areas of responsibility under Section 1509 (A), which now encompass the largest components of the Program.

1) Maintenance of a Compulsive Gamblers Assistance Organization's toll free problem gambling telephone number to provide crisis counseling and referral services to families experiencing difficulty as a result of problem or compulsive gambling.

In December 2006, within four weeks of receiving notice of the availability of funds, the Department established a Gambling Addiction Information and Referral line: 1-877-565-2112. The phone number is owned by the commonwealth, thus remaining constant even as contractors, providers and assistance organizations may change. When initially established, this line was answered during normal business hours by Department staff with clinical backgrounds in addiction counseling. This temporary solution was necessary in order to provide for the needs of the citizens of the commonwealth while a contract was negotiated with a long-term provider. This was prompted due to the November 2006 opening of the first slots parlor within the commonwealth. The Department also made a strategic decision to expand the scope of the referral line to include not only family members, as stated in the legislation, but also individuals who may be in crisis situations or are experiencing difficulties as a result of compulsive and problem gambling. By offering an expanded scope of referral, the Department is best able to serve those experiencing multiple issues, such as an individual who is experiencing a gambling addiction while also battling substance or alcohol abuse.

At the suggestion of the Gaming Control Board during a multi-agency meeting, the Department researched several vendors across the country and developed a list of requirements the vendor must meet in order to provide the highest level of service. Bensinger, DuPont and Associates, based in Chicago, Illinois, was selected because of its ability to fulfill the standards established by the Department and to provide the services within the available budget. In July 2007, a three year agreement was executed with Bensinger, DuPont and Associates to operate the Pennsylvania Gambling Addiction 24-Hour Hotline (1-877-565-2112). Bensinger, DuPont and Associates (BDA) produces a monthly report of all calls received and data collected from those calls. The Department is engaged in ongoing discussions with the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania regarding a transfer of the Hotline responsibility to them and the utilization of their vendor, the Louisiana Problem Gambling Hotline. By allowing the Council to manage the hotline services, the Department would be better able to establish one central hotline resource.

2) The promotion of public awareness regarding the recognition and prevention of problem or compulsive gambling.

Prior to the availability of the specified funds, the Department borrowed print materials about compulsive and problem gambling from a variety of other state and national organizations and made them available through the Department's Public Health Information Clearinghouse. Currently, an array of information is available through various brochures, the Department's problem gambling Web site and by contacting the Department's toll free hotline 1-877-565-2112.

3) Facilitation, through in-service training and other means, of the availability of effective assistance programs for problem and compulsive gamblers and family members affected by problem and compulsive gambling.

Act 71 requires the Department to ensure that effective treatment and assistance programs are available to address the needs of those impacted by compulsive and problem gambling, including family members and children of problem gamblers. The Department made an early decision to broadly define the population in need of treatment services, including those persons who might not meet nationally recognized diagnostic criteria for compulsive gambling. This broad definition allows the Department to provide services to those, including youths, who may be in an early stage of problem gambling before they meet diagnostic criteria for compulsive gambling.

In order to have effective programs available, the Department identified the need for providers to obtain certification through a recognized, accrediting body that requires the completion of gambling specific training. After extensive research, the Department endorsed the National Council on Problem Gambling Certification and began to offer training opportunities for gambling addiction counselors. The Pennsylvania Certification Board also developed a Certificate of Competency in Problem Gambling for those individuals holding a current clinical Board certification. As of January 22, 2009, there are 151 persons who have a Certificate of Competency in Problem Gambling through the Pennsylvania Certification Board and six individuals with full certification from the National Council on Problem Gambling.

Regardless of the certification received, counselors must have completed 30 hours of gambling specific training. Since the National Certified Gambling Counselor Certification procedure can take over a year to complete, the Department has implemented a two year process that allows individuals to provide services and receive reimbursement from the Department while working to receive full national certification.

In order to develop a cadre of appropriate training opportunities, the Department procured the services of Ms. Joanna Franklin, a nationally recognized expert who works for the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania, to provide two "Training of Trainers" in November 2006 and April 2007, respectively. These events served as an additional resource for the Department, treatment providers and institutions and allowed the Department to utilize Pennsylvania trainers who are local and more readily available.

Problem gambling courses are now incorporated into the Department's ongoing educational outreach program, including gambling training sessions that have been added to each of the mini-regional workshops, which occur every other month in all six regional health districts. The Department also sponsored a free, five-day training event in May 2007 that provided potential counselors with the required 30 hours of training for certification. Furthermore, the Department was a sponsor for the October 2008 Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania's conference held in Harrisburg and paid for 13 scholarships to receive the required 30 hours of training.

4) Conducting studies to identify adults and juveniles in this commonwealth who are at risk of becoming compulsive gamblers.

The Department's Bureau of Health Statistics and Research developed specific gambling-related questions for two surveys to determine the prevalence of gambling in Pennsylvania. The results of The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Questionnaire of PA residents aged 18 and older from July 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, as well as the 2007 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) administered in the fall of 2007 to children in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 have been added as an addendum on the final page of this testimony for your review.

5) *Providing grants to and contracting with organizations, which provide services as set forth in this section.*

Awarding grants and contracting services is a standard function of the Department for many of its public health outreach and service programs, including problem gambling. The Department maintains an agreement with the Council on Compulsive Gambling, along with a dozen other approved individuals, to provide counselor training, as well as with Bensinger, DuPont and Associates for the Department's hotline service. In addition, the Department has numerous Participating Provider Agreements in place with those agencies that are providing gambling treatment services. The Department is preparing to launch a mini-grant program that will enable community organizations, local governments and other interested agencies to apply for one-time funds (up to \$5,000) for public education and outreach in their local areas. This program is intended to facilitate an increase of knowledge for Pennsylvanians about problem gambling and the resources that are available to them, to implement activities directed toward changing individual and community norms, attitudes and gambling behaviors and to increase referral and engagement into treatment for problem gambling.

6) *Providing reimbursement for organizations for reasonable expenses in assisting the Department of Health in carrying out the purposes of this section.*

The Department is committed to ensuring that a broad range of service providers are available to provide gambling treatment services to the citizens of the commonwealth. Drug and alcohol providers, mental health providers, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists are eligible to receive Department reimbursement for problem gambling services. To qualify, a provider must have staff certified by either the National Council on Problem Gambling or the Pennsylvania Certification Board. The Department developed language and contractual requirements for the Participating Provider Agreements in order to secure providers for problem gambling services. Approximately 40 providers are under

contract since the Department began accepting applications from interested providers in April 2008. Of these providers, 24 are located in the Western part of Pennsylvania, and eight are located in the Southeastern area.

As of January 22, 2009, 18 individuals were receiving gambling treatment in Pennsylvania through the Department. While this low number is a concern, it is consistent with the experiences of other states with problem gambling programs. For example, both West Virginia and Delaware indicated that, despite having funding available, individuals were not seeking services. This also appeared to be the case in Missouri and Washington. Information from Missouri indicates that its problem gambling program served seven individuals in its first year, increasing to 96 individuals four years later. When the Washington problem gambling program started, it reported treating 46 individuals in the first two years.

Additional Department Activities Outside of the Requirements of Act 71

The Department continues to strive for comprehensive, coordinated and appropriate prevention, treatment and intervention services in Pennsylvania by forming partnerships and relationships with other state agencies involved in gaming activities. In November 2006, the Department championed the Compulsive Gambling Issues Group, which is comprised of members from the Department of Revenue – Lottery Commission, Department of Agriculture - Horse Racing Commission and Harness Racing Commission, and the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board. The group meets regularly to discuss problem and compulsive gambling and to strategize on ways commonwealth agencies can best work together.

An example of this collaboration occurred during National Problem Gambling Awareness Week, March 10-15, 2008. A joint statement was issued in support of National Problem Gambling Awareness Week by the Secretaries of Agriculture, Revenue and Health. As a