

MASAP Position Statement

Casinos and Gambling

The Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs does not take a position on the Casino vote. We acknowledge that gambling already exists in Maine.

We believe that it is important that people maintain strong coping skills and healthy lifestyles in order to deal with the stressors in their lives to achieve balance and well-being. However, no progress has ever been made against an epidemic by treating only the casualties. Exacerbating addictions, whether to gambling or substances, are often the unintended outcomes linked to gambling activities.

We believe that it is important to understand that gambling is not a risk-free activity. Individuals must learn to identify risk factors, warning signs and how to help someone who may be concerned about their own gambling or the gambling of someone they care about.

To address the inevitable needs of Maine's citizens in dealing with addiction issues intensified by the proposed casino experience, MASAP believes that Maine must

1. Develop and provide public education directed to creating awareness of problem gambling as a serious public health problem; to communicating the signs and symptoms of problem gambling; and to providing information about community resources.
2. Create a comprehensive prevention approach that includes such issues as legislation, public policy, and school policy and enforcement
3. Operate a Helpline which provides information and referral to treatment services for problem gamblers and their families.
4. Conduct prevention programs in a variety of sectors in the community.
5. Train addictions and other health services professionals in approaches to prevention, assessment and treatment of problem gambling.
6. Advocate for research on problem gambling and the establishment of sufficient prevention and treatment programs in the public sector.
7. Conduct surveys and other research on problem gambling to provide a knowledge base for program development and for advocacy for the creation of services.
8. Work with local and national community organizations to develop joint programs which assist problem gamblers and their families.
9. Collaborate with the public and private gaming industry to develop responsible gaming/wagering programs to reduce underage gambling and the impact of problem gambling on customers

MASAP also believes it is important for Maine citizens to recognize the difficulties Maine's Native Americans face in terms of poverty, discrimination and substance abuse. We believe it is critical for the Maine Legislature to authorize a Task Force to develop recommendations for ways in which Native Americans, along with the private and public sectors, can join together to overcome these serious challenges.