MARG Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

Location: Hollywood Casino

Present: Mary Drexler, Jason Bittinger, Jennifer Wetherell, Jasmine Countess, Charles LaBoy, James Butler, John Martin, Joe Cavilla, Michael Hundt, Sandra Davis Hart, Gray Barton, Lori Rugle, Patrick McArdle, Jeannie Magdefrau, Rob White, Ardenia Holland, Eugenia Conolly, Tamala Law, Tom Coppinger, Rachel Szukala, Lynn Albizo, Matthew Heiskell, Tim Shea, Dennis Teegardin

**Action Items**:

* A subgroup will be formed to discuss VEP concerns, with Mary Drexler as the point of contact
* Problem gambling experts should compile information for court staff training
* The casinos will develop short problem gambling messages and present these at the next meeting
* The casinos may submit suggestions to improve the VEP notification process
* The new chair nomination will be tabled for a future meeting
* The National Conference needs more volunteers to assist

Meeting Called to Order:

Charles LaBoy, Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency (MLGCA), called the meeting to order at 11:45 am.

Introductions:

Charles thanked Matthew Heiskell, Hollywood Casino, and his staff for hosting the meeting. All other members present introduced themselves.

Choosing a New Chair:

Some individuals from the counseling community expressed interest in the MLGCA retaining oversight of the Committee. After some discussion, it was decided to table the nomination of a new chair until the incumbent MLGCA Director, Gordon Medenica, is able to attend.

National Conference 2015 Update:

Michael Hundt, Maryland Council on Problem Gambling, passed around goodie bags containing problem gambling information and then discussed the upcoming 29th national conference. He asked individuals to attend the conference’s Friday night event, which will be held at the American Visionary Museum; artwork by individuals in recovery will be featured. Michael also discussed the scholarships the council awarded to seven individuals. Around 350 registrations have been received so far and the council still needs volunteers to assist with the events.

Process for Assisting Gamblers Who Leave Loved Ones in the Car:

Lori Rugle, Center for Excellence, expressed an interest in discussing therapy options for gamblers who leave their loved ones in the car. Mary Drexler, MLGCA, noted that resource cards were printed for distribution to problem gamblers. These cards were originally produced for compliance officer use for VEP participants but could also be given to other problem gamblers. Informational brochures, like those used at Horseshoe Baltimore, were also mentioned as a resource.

Additionally, Mary stated that she has been working with the Office of the Courts and will be talking with judges and court staff about problem gambling. Eugenia Conolly, Behavioral Health and Disabilities, pointed to local health departments as another area of continuing education and Gray Barton, Administrative Office of the Courts, emphasized the need for more problem gambling education within the courts. Charles suggested that individuals compile informational materials for court staff training.

Support for Reducing Underage Violations:

The Center of Excellence has been distributing brochures on underage gambling. Tom Coppinger, Maryland Live, stated that although legislation was passed to allow casinos to pursue action against violators, this has proved difficult. Lynn Albizo, Maryland Addictions Director’s Council, suggested that responsible gambling advocates develop more prevention initiatives.

Shortened Message for Small Ads:

Tamala Law, Horseshoe Casino, expressed an interest in developing a shorter responsible gambling message for use across all media. Charles stated that he would be open to the properties developing and presenting suggestions at the next meeting. Additionally, John Martin, MLGCA, indicated that his staff is looking at best practices for messaging in other jurisdictions and may be able to share those in future meetings.

VEP Concerns:

Tom Coppinger expressed a desire to streamline the VEP notification process so that notifications are not overlooked; he also wants the courts to stop subpoenaing multiple members of his staff for violations. Charles stated that the goal is to have an integrated system where casinos can easily access VEP information. He requested the facilities to submit any suggestions they may have about streamlining the VEP notification process to the MLGCA.

Tom also expressed concerns about prosecuting individuals on the list. Lori indicated that a specialized court for problem gambling could be a solution to this problem. Eugenia then suggested that a subgroup be formed to discuss this issue further. Mary was appointed as the contact person for this subgroup.

Other Member Updates:

1. Behavioral Health Administration: Eugenia stated that the agency now has a secretary, but their behavior and health administration director will be retiring. Additionally, the agency will continue to fund the Center for Excellence for another three years. New staff member Ardenia Holland was also introduced.
2. Councils on Problem Gambling: Patrick McArdle, Center of Excellence, mentioned two studies the center is conducting, which include one entitled Pegasus and one involving veterans. Lori discussed her work, in conjunction with health departments, on integrating problem gambling initiatives with other outreach initiatives. The Center of Excellence is also working with prevention specialists and state cohort groups to discuss problem gambling impacts and produced several PSAs aimed at women and youth. Asian Americans and Latino Americans will be the target of the next round of PSAs.
3. Maryland Lottery and Gaming Control Agency: Mary distributed the latest casino and lottery VEP reports. She discussed the webinars she recorded for the bingo halls as well as the courts training she conducted in April with the Center of Excellence. John Martin stated that the lottery is looking to become certified responsible gambling partners and will update the committee on this process.
4. Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: The agency has a new secretary.
5. Maryland Judiciary: This Fall’s problem gambling training at the Office of the Courts will be focused on court staff, probation staff, and law enforcement in addition to the judges.
6. Maryland State Senate/House of Delegates: No updates
7. Gaming Facilities
   1. Hollywood Casino Perryville: The casino is in the process of planning for Responsible Gambling Education week in August.
   2. Ocean Downs Casino: The casino has reconfigured two entrances to prepare for the upcoming racing season.
   3. Maryland Live! Casino: Rachel Szukala has been overseeing problem gambling training.
   4. Rocky Gap Casino: The casino is adding additional staff at its entrance for the busy summer season and will be looking at different prevention and detection strategies to address underage violations.
   5. Horseshoe Baltimore Casino: The casino is conducting responsible gambling training next week.