

Governor's Commission on Addiction, Treatment, & Prevention

GAMBLING TASK FORCE

July 21, 2026 1:30 –3:00 pm
NH Hospital Association/GUW
125 Airport Road, Concord, NH 03301

Attendance

Name	Attendance
Task Force Members	
Keith Nyhan	Absent
David Suckling	In person
Phoebe Axtman	In person
Brian Harlow	In person
Angela Bergen	In person
Randy Stevens	Zoom
Nick Pfeifer	Zoom
Steve Norton	Absent
Public	
Dan Andrus	In person
Ed Talbot	Zoom
Liaison(s)/ Subject Matter Experts/Invited Guests	
Elizabeth Biron	Zoom
Annette Escalante	Zoom
Center for Excellence on Addiction/JSI Staff	
Amy Daniels	In person
Olivia DiGeronimo	In person
Rekha Sreedhara	Zoom

Welcome & Introductions

All participants, in person and on Zoom, introduced themselves. In person were Brian Harlow self-representing, Angela Bergen of the NH Council on Problem Gambling, Phoebe Axtman of Be One Counseling, Dave Suckling of Alexandria Police, and Amy Daniels and Olivia DiGeronimo of JSI who provide technical assistance to the Governor's Commission. Online were Nick Pfeifer of NHADACA, Elizabeth Biron from NH DHHS BDAS, Annette Escalante as the Commission Chair, and Rekha Sreedhara of JSI. Since the last Task Force meeting, two members have been welcomed to the Task Force, including Nick and Steve Norton, who was unable to attend.

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There is not a quorum with in person attendance alone, so the $\frac{1}{3}$ quorum rule went into effect to begin the meeting. Under these circumstances, a full roll call should be taken for every vote held. One Zoom attendee underwent the justification process. Nick Pfeifer was in their home, with no one in the room with them, and they were unable to attend the meeting in person due to scheduling conflicts.

Review 5/15/26 Minutes & Action Items

Brian made a motion to accept the minutes as is. Phoebe seconded. No discussion. A roll call vote was then taken with the following results: Brian Harlow, Phoebe Axtman, Angela Bergen all voted yes. David Suckling and Nick Pfeifer abstained. Motion passes.

Develop Task Force Objectives

Randy Stevens entered the meeting online at 1:45 pm. He was in his car alone, traveling from a previous meeting.

Olivia showed the members examples of the other Task Force's overarching objectives that guide the work of each Task Force. The Chief recommended the first objective being "what is problem gambling and how does it affect the state of NH."

Annette agreed that she wants this Task Force to be the group that provides education and information to the rest of the Commission. She wants to know: does NH have a problem? Do we have the resources to address it? Annette suggested gathering data and using the Environmental Scan from the PTTC. This Task Force can work to create messaging and education around problem gambling. She also mentioned education for providers to treat gambling disorders.

Randy agreed that many clinicians do not feel confident with gambling disorder treatment. Phoebe mentioned that much of gambling disorder research is incomplete. Without having clear methods of treatment, research will continue to be lacking. It may be more useful to look to other states for useful research, especially Massachusetts. Phoebe also recommended using the national definition of problem gambling, such as the National Council on Problem Gambling.

For Objective 1, the Task Force decided to focus on identifying what is problem gambling and how it affects the state of NH.

Objective 2 would center around plans or recommendations around evidence-based strategies to address problem gambling. While Objective 1 seeks to understand and define the extent of the problem in NH, Objective 2 asks what should be done about it. The Task Force discussed that this involves more than training being available; the importance and prevalence of this condition (especially co-occurring) needs to be communicated. Phoebe also mentioned the gap between substance use treatment and

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process addiction treatment and building the confidence in providers to also treat process addictions. It is also important to tie in mental health to process addictions.

Objective 3 will focus on investment recommendations and working with the Commission. The Task Force felt that it was important to have a recommendation on how funds should be distributed, especially since funding is so limited for problem gambling. The Task Force also discussed funding of the Governor's Commission (which is now general funds rather than "Alcohol Funds"), as well as the video lottery-specific funds the Commission will be receiving.

The objectives for the Gambling Task Force, as drafted during this meeting, are:

Objective 1: Research problem gambling and understand its impact in NH.

Objective 2: Look at existing resources (including financial) and work out how to develop resources and education in NH.

Objective 3: Inform the full Commission on strategic investments of gambling funds and problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery best practices.

The Task Force decided to focus on the scope of the problem in New Hampshire through data as the first step, with the potential to modify the following objectives later on. The above objectives are a draft and will be modified at a later date.

Task Force members had a discussion on the treatment of gambling disorder; specifically, they discussed whether insurance typically covers mental health treatment for this condition and whether providers are reimbursed at the same or similar rates as a substance use disorder. Some states require additional licensing to treat gambling conditions, but this is not always necessary with the correct training.

Phoebe offered to create a short guide to help this Task Force with language and definitions.

Discuss Task Force Membership

The Task Force wanted to review membership of this new group to ensure the right perspectives are at the table. Phoebe represents treatment and education. Angela represents advocacy. Brian represents lived experience. Randy represents recovery. Nick represents treatment. Chief Suckling represents law enforcement. Keith (absent) represents the industry in the form of previous employment at a casino.

In the previous meeting, there were discussions about potentially bringing on a family member and someone in the industry. The Task Force discussed the potential addition of someone in the business community, medical community, those who have a systemic perspective, or a bankruptcy lawyer. As a part of advocacy, it may be beneficial to have someone from New Futures attend, even if not a member. Angela also mentioned mental health court or drug court as a potential source.

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Ed Talbot (public member) suggested a problem gambling court in NY state as well as Dr. Debbie Laplante and Dr. Heather Gray. Both Debbie and Heather work at Cambridge Health Alliance and live in New Hampshire. They are research experts in this field and created a report called Comprehensive Services for Problem Gambling in NH. Ed offered to send a copy of this report to the Task Force.

Phoebe can ask for recommendations for a bankruptcy lawyer.; JSI will reach out to the researchers from Cambridge and New Futures.

New Business

Angela and Ed Talbot met with a developer of an app called Evive that is free for users. It collects data from users about their gambling habits, moods, and more. There is a lot of education and behavioral health integration built in the app. One of the company's offerings is to partner with states to collect data and advocate for funding. The data is anonymous, aggregated, and can be shared with the state. They offer a 6-month pilot program. The cost is \$50,000, and the state would then be supported by Evive to expand the use of this app.

Angela made a motion to invite Sam DeMello to the next Task Force meeting to give a short presentation. Chief seconded. All Task Force members are in favor. Motion passes.

Public Comment

Dan Andrus thanked the Task Force for the insightful meeting.

Closing

Chief David Suckling made a motion to adjourn. Angela motion second. All Task Force members are in favor. Motion passes.

Decisions/Recommendations Made

1. Task Force objectives were drafted.
2. Phoebe will create a short handout for this Task Force with language guidelines.
3. Phoebe will ask for recommendations for a bankruptcy lawyer; JSI will reach out to the researchers from Cambridge and New Futures.
4. Angela and JSI will work to invite Sam DeMello to the next meeting.

Next Steps

- The next Gambling Task Force meeting will take place on August 18 at 10:00-11:30 am.