

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Melissa Lohnes, mlohnes@cpcglobal.com
Erika McCarthy, emccarthy@cpcglobal.com
Colette Phillips Communications, Inc. (781) 449-6268

**MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL ON COMPULSIVE GAMBLING LAUNCHES
NEW PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGN TO HIGHLIGHT ITS HELPLINE:
1 800 GAM 1234**

*Four percent of MA residents struggled with gambling problems in the past year;
Commonwealth's elderly population at risk*

Boston, MA, June 14, 2004 – The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling today announces a new public service campaign to raise awareness of its Helpline and support services offered for problem gamblers and their families. The confidential service is available toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-GAM-1234.

Compulsive gambling is a problem largely ignored in today's society. The reality is that compulsive gamblers experience similar detrimental consequences as those afflicted with the more recognizable addictive diseases. These consequences include devastated finances, strained relationships with loved ones and personal emotional and social troubles.

Approximately six percent of the adult general population has had some significant, adverse effect from gambling in their lifetimes. About four percent (or nearly 250,000 Massachusetts residents) has had a gambling problem within the past year. Of this staggering number of people, the elderly are one of the groups that the Mass. Council has identified as a high-risk population group.

“There is an abundance of gambling opportunities available today, and they are rapidly increasing,” said Kathleen M. Scanlan, M.A., executive director of Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. “It is crucial that problem gamblers, their families and friends know there are support services available to help them.”

“Compulsive gambling is an addiction much like alcoholism and drug dependency and its important that we make this Help Line known so that problem gamblers can find help,” said Tim Cahill, State Treasurer.

Kathleen Scanlan, Tim Cahill and others will discuss this important issue and the state's initiative at a press conference today at 1:30 pm, to be held at the Kit Clark Services Center in Dorchester, MA.

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling has launched this new public service campaign to raise awareness of its Helpline and support services offered for problem gamblers and their families. The Council Helpline is available toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-GAM-1234. Through a series of radio spots, the Council aims to increase call volume to the Helpline and introduce gamblers and their loved ones to the Council's services. These services include self-help guidance, referrals to treatment

providers, information and public awareness, community education and professional training and advocacy.

The campaign includes a two-day media tour in communities such as Boston and Worcester.

About the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a non-profit health agency that provides help for compulsive gamblers and their families. Thomas N. Cummings and a small group of people recovering from a gambling problem founded the Council in 1983.

Since 1987, the Council has been funded by the Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Abuse Services through legislation that designates annual funding for compulsive gambling education and treatment. Funds are appropriated from the Massachusetts State Lottery and the Massachusetts Racing Commission.

The Mission of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is to provide leadership in reducing the social, financial and emotional costs of problem gambling and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including information and education, capacity building, advocacy and referral services for problem gamblers, their families and the greater community.

###