



2026 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY UPDATES

Behavioral Health Legislative Updates from the Indiana Statehouse

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January 12, 2026

2026 Indiana General Assembly

Priority Bills:

SB 91: Syringe Exchange Program Extension

During the first week of the 2026 Session, the Senate Health Committee considered SB 91, which would extend the opportunity for local communities to avail themselves of voluntary syringe exchange programs. This legislation has been in place for a decade, but sunsets this year without this legislation. Senator Mike Crider, R-Greenfield, advocated for extending the program an additional ten years to combat issues such as addiction and the spread of infectious diseases. Although support for the bill was substantial, there were concerns as well.

Stephanie Anderson, MHAI Chief Operating Officer, testified that research on syringe service programs (SSPs), indicates that they are effective public health interventions that reduce disease transmission and facilitate entry into substance use treatment without increasing drug use. Syringe exchange programs provide many additional resources beyond just the exchange of clean syringes, including testing and vaccination for infectious diseases, linkage to treatment for infectious diseases, linkage to treatment for substance use disorders, wound care, and access to other psychosocial resources proven to reduce the likelihood of continued substance use.

According to the CDC, which has conducted over 40 years of research, comprehensive SSPs are "safe, effective, and cost saving." They do not increase illegal drug use or crime, and they play an important role in reducing the transmission of viral hepatitis, HIV, and other infections. SSP's are associated with an estimated 50% reduction in HIV and hepatitis C incidence." Additionally, both the CDC and NIDA have found that participants are five times more likely to enter substance use disorder treatment and three and half times more likely to stop injecting drugs.

With just 8 Indiana counties participating in SSP's in Indiana, there have been more than 23,000 participants since their introduction to the state in 2015. Mental Health America of Indiana supports SB 91 as an important access point for individuals into substance use disorder treatment. Despite differing views and testimony, the bill passed with a 10-2 vote.



HB 1078: Online Lottery Sales and Voluntary Exclusion

The House Committee on Public Policy considered HB 1078, a bill proposed by Representative Ethan Manning, R-Logansport, which intends to expand the Hoosier Lottery by making its products available online.

Lisa Hutcheson, MHAI Vice President, voiced concerns over the impact of online gambling on young adults' mental health, emphasizing the need for comprehensive treatment, training, and public education regarding gambling addiction—as access to gambling increases.

Problem gambling among college students is more than double that of adults overall—about 6% (compared to 2%). A 2023 NCAA survey of over 100,000 student athletes found nearly 60% of 18- to 22-year-olds had participated in sports betting, with some experiencing financial distress, academic struggles, and mental health crises.

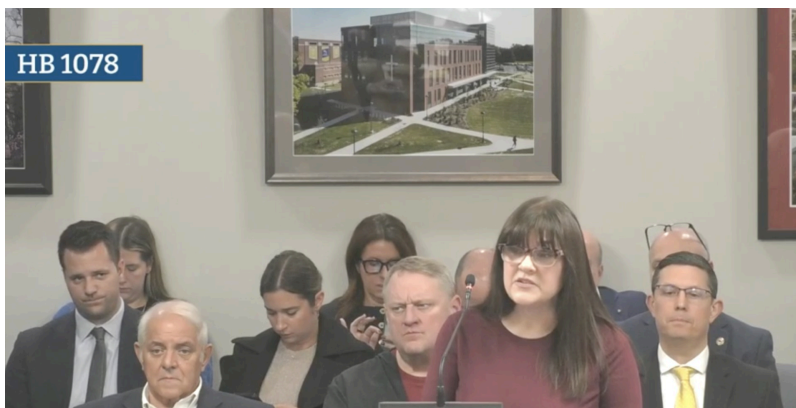
As with alcohol, access and availability matter. A national poll shows one in six parents would not know if their teen was betting online, and two-thirds report their teen already has a bank account or debit or credit card.

[View National Poll](#)

People with a gambling disorder are nearly twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression, 40- 50% also have a substance use disorder, and nearly 17% report a suicide attempt. In Indiana, of those estimated to have problem gambling disorders (about 4% or roughly 800 people) only 2% sought treatment.

Finally, it is crucial that any expansion of gambling in Indiana be matched with a meaningful investment in research, prevention, and treatment—especially for specific populations including youth and young adults, adults 65+, veterans, and first responders.

The committee voted 9-3 in favor of advancing the bill and MHAI will continue to promote access to comprehensive treatment in conjunction with any increase in gambling access.



MHAI Priorities for the 2026 Session:

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