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State Agencies Collaborate on Problem Gambling Initiative

(CLEVELAND) – As casinos and video lottery terminals (VLTs) at race tracks are set to open in Ohio, four state agencies have joined together to form an initiative to combat problem gambling.

The Ohio Lottery Commission (OLC), Ohio State Racing Commission (OSRC), the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) and the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) have formed an initiative known as **Ohio for Responsible Gambling (ORG)**. ODADAS serves as the resource partner for the new initiative and the lead agency responsible for prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

The Ohio Lottery has been proactive with problem gambling efforts since the early 1980's, funding a 24/7 problem gambling helpline since 1990 and providing funding to ODADAS for prevention and treatment and for training of problem gambling counselors since 2002.

This year, ODADAS launched a prevalence study for problem and pathological gambling to establish a baseline among Ohioans before the opening of new casinos and video lottery terminals. The study will be repeated by ODADAS at regular intervals after new gambling sites are up and running to study the impact of more access to gambling opportunities. The study was funded by the Ohio Lottery as part of the more than \$1.2 million that it allocated to problem gambling initiatives this fiscal year.

The Ohio for Responsible Gambling initiative will build on those programs, offering information and resources to individuals in need of services through the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline (1-800-589-9966) and ORG's website, www.org.ohio.gov.

The Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline is staffed 24/7 by trained referral specialists who can provide help in all areas of social service needs including counseling, financial assistance and health services. The helpline is run through the United Way of Greater Cleveland 211 First Call

for Help, which maintains an up-to-date referral database of health and human services to assist callers in all areas of the state.

ORG's statewide awareness campaign will begin airing on May 14, 2012 as the first casino in Cleveland opens. The ad campaign titled "Silence the Addiction" illustrates the dangers of problem gambling and promotes the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline (1-800-589-9966) where problem gamblers can call for help.

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call the Ohio Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-589-9966 or visit www.org.ohio.gov.

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