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Faces & Voices of Recovery Launches Addiction Recovery Insurance Discrimination Registry

Washington, DC, February 1, 2007 – Faces & Voices of Recovery, a national addiction recovery advocacy campaign, today announced the first-ever national registry to document the stories and experiences of those who have been denied insurance coverage for addiction treatment and recovery support services. The Addiction Recovery Insurance Discrimination Registry will chronicle the discriminatory policies and practices that are preventing people and their families from new lives in recovery.

“If you have experienced insurance discrimination, I urge you to let others know by sharing your story.” said Merlyn Karst, chair of Faces & Voices of Recovery’s board of directors and is in long-term recovery. “By our silence we are keeping too many of our loved ones from getting the help they need.”

The Registry asks individuals to describe their health insurance plans and their experiences trying to use them to get treatment and recovery support services. The Registry will then be used as a tool to educate lawmakers and the public about the crisis of insurance discrimination in the United States. Topics covered in the Registry include:

- Accounts of an individual’s experiences seeking help for their addiction.
- How individuals think that the system should have worked, with detailed information about their interactions with the insurance system.
- A brief history of the individual or family member’s addiction and recovery, as a way to contextualize their experiences.

The registry’s launch coincides with field hearings on insurance discrimination spearheaded by U.S. Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN) and allies for insurance equity in the U.S. Congress. At those hearings, policymakers are hearing from citizens who are shining light on the fact that far too many Americans are not getting the help they need to achieve long-term recovery from addiction, even if they have private health insurance.

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“We laud Representatives Kennedy and Ramstad for their leadership in developing meaningful legislation to end these discriminatory policies. Without these changes, untold numbers of people will continue to be denied the help they need to achieve recovery,” said Pat Taylor, executive director of Faces & Voices of Recovery. “We are launching this initiative as a way to measure and quantify the impact on people seeking help for their addiction to alcohol and other drugs. We feel this is a solid first step in changing the system.”

Faces & Voices of Recovery was launched in 2001 in St. Paul, Minnesota and is governed by recovery advocates from around the country. The organization is working to mobilize, organize and rally the millions of Americans in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families, friends and allies in a campaign to end discrimination and achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis. For more information, please visit: www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

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