

PARITY IMPLEMENTATION COALITION

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CONTACTS:
Carol McDaid – 202.737.8168
Sam Muszynski – 703.907.8562

RELEASE OF REGULATIONS LAUDED AS IMPORTANT STEP FOR THOSE WITH ADDICTION AND MENTAL ILLNESS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—January 29, 2010—Members of the Parity Implementation Coalition, a group of addiction and mental health consumer and provider organizations committed to the implementation of the 2008 parity law, are pleased that the Secretaries of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Treasury today released interim final regulations implementing the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA).

“Today begins the final chapter on a course that my father and many others set out on over a decade ago – to ensure that Americans with mental illness have equal access to health care,” said David Wellstone, the son of the late Senator Paul Wellstone, an internationally recognized civil and mental health rights activist.

Coalition Steering Committee member Mark Covall, President/CEO of the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems said, “thanks to the efforts of Reps. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and his father the late Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM), Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT), Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-MN), and the Chairmen of the Committees in the House and Senate who all worked diligently to make passage of the parity law possible, today we have parity regulations that will allow us to begin the important work of making access to quality mental health services available for the millions of Americans who need them.”

Mark Mishek, President and CEO of the national non-profit Hazelden Foundation, said, “With the release of the regulations, we look forward to working with the Administration to ensure that the individuals and families who need addiction and mental health services will now finally be able to access them. We’ve come a long way, but we aren’t there yet.” The Coalition will be releasing a detailed analysis of the regulations in the coming weeks.

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The Parity Implementation Coalition includes the American Psychiatric Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Betty Ford Center, Faces and Voices of Recovery, Hazelden Foundation, Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare and The Watershed Addiction Treatment Programs. The organizations advanced parity legislation for over twelve years in an effort to end discrimination against individuals and families who seek services for mental health and substance use disorders and remain committed to its effective implementation.