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Advocates Say Recovery Services Program Threatened

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News Feature

By Bob Curley

The [Recovery Community Services Program \(RCSP\)](#) -- a grant program that funds peer recovery support services for individuals with alcohol and other drug problems -- could be on the chopping block, and advocates for addiction recovery are mobilizing to convince the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) to continue funding the program.

[Faces and Voice of Recovery](#) recently sent out an [action alert](#) urging RCSP supporters to write to SAMHSA administrator Terry Cline and urge him to restore funding for RCSP in FY2008 and to support full funding of the program in the FY2009 budget.

"We understand that [SAMHSA is] not funding new grantees in 2008," said Pat Taylor, executive director of Faces and Voices of Recovery. "This is the only federal program that funds peer-support services. We have seen incredible success ... it just doesn't make any sense."

Faces and Voices of Recovery also has asked its legislative allies, including Reps. Jim Ramstad (R-Minn.) and Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.), the heads of the Congressional Addiction Treatment and Recovery Caucus, to request that SAMHSA restore RCSP funding.

"This high-performing program complements, extends and enhances the formal treatment provided by professionals," noted Faces and Voices in their action alert about RCSP. "Peer services provide the community connectedness and social support that are so necessary to sustain recovery. Some of the innovations that have been pioneered by RCSP grantees include recovery community centers, telephone recovery support services, and recovery coaching."

This is not the first time that the future of RCSP has been in question: a [similar plan to kill the program](#) was raised and later dropped two years ago. At the time, a SAMHSA spokesperson said that recovery programs were a "cornerstone" of then SAMHSA head Charles Curie's administration.

In FY2007, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment made \$2.8 million in RCSP grants to eight projects (out of 140 applicants). FY2002 was the biggest funding year for the project, when 21 grants totaling \$4.8 million were awarded. At that time, RCSP was known as the Recovery Community Support Program and focused on recovery advocacy, not peer-to-peer services.

President Bush's FY2008 budget request for CSAT included a \$46.8-

million overall funding reduction and a proposed cut of \$3.9 million for RCSP, trimming the program to \$5.3 million in new and continuation grants. However, Bush's proposed cut to CSAT wasn't sustained by Congress' budget plan for FY2008, which passed in December and provided essentially level funding for CSAT compared to FY2007.

RCSP doesn't have a line item in CSAT's budget, however, giving the agency greater flexibility in how and if it funds the program.

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