

Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office  
55 St. Clair Avenue West  
Box 28, Suite 802  
Toronto, ON M4V 2Y7

May 18, 2007

**RE: Membership in the Mental Health Police Records Coalition**

To Coalition Co-Chairs David Simpson, Nicole Zahradnik, and Theresa Claxton:

YWCA Toronto is pleased to become a member of the Mental Health Police Records Check Coalition. The Coalition's principals and goals are in line with YWCA's advocacy work, which focuses on the equality of women and girls in our community. YWCA Toronto is the city's largest multi-service organization by, for and about women and girls. We help women achieve equality, economic independence and lives free from violence through our four program areas: housing and support; employment and skills development; girls and family programs; and advocacy.

YWCA has been a turning point for women for over 130 years. To this end, we would like to highlight the particular significance of the Coalition's work for women and girls, and offer the following information for inclusion in the Coalition's literature.

Statistics show that women are more likely to disclose and seek medical help for mental health issues, including clinical depression, hospitalization for attempted suicide and other psychiatric disorders. Much of the risk to women's mental well-being is related to experiences of childhood trauma, sexual violence and woman abuse. The 2006 Statistics Canada General Social Survey reveals that half of all Canadian women have experienced some form of physical or emotional abuse. These factors put women and girls at significantly greater risk of their lives being negatively impacted by the current police practices of disclosing police contact for mental health reasons, particularly at times when women or girls are making efforts to improve their quality of life.

We recognize the importance of the Coalition and are grateful to be able to speak to the issues as they affect women in particular. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important advocacy initiative.

Yours truly,



Heather M. McGregor  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA Toronto