



News Release

For Immediate Release
April 14, 2011

PHALLOMETRIC TESTING SHOULD NOT BE USED ON B.C. YOUTH

VICTORIA – A report released today by the Representative for Children and Youth says that phallometric testing should not be used on male youth in B.C.'s provincially run sexual offence treatment program.

Phallometric testing involves the use of a penile plethysmograph (PPG) to measure male sexual arousal.

In the report, *Phallometric Testing and B.C.'s Youth Justice System*, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond concludes that after examining existing research and speaking with experts and clinicians, it is not possible to come to a definitive finding about the effectiveness of PPG testing in assessing and treating youth sexual offenders. As well, it is also not possible to conclude whether or not PPG testing causes harm to youth, she said.

“With a procedure so invasive, so controversial by its very nature and so questionable in its reliability, great care must be exercised when dealing with a young and often vulnerable population,” said Turpel-Lafond. “The greatest of care with what is known at this time means not using PPG testing on youth in British Columbia.”

PPG testing was used in the past by Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services (YFPS), part of B.C.'s Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). In July 2010, the then-minister of MCFD initially suspended and then ordered its permanent cancellation.

Although PPG testing has been cancelled, the Representative decided that this independent review was necessary because of the nature of the issues raised around effectiveness of PPG testing and consent issues, and the potential for the cancellation decision to perhaps be re-considered in the future.

The Representative's recommendations include that PPG testing in B.C. not be reinstated at this time, that MCFD undertake a comprehensive review of the Youth Sexual Treatment Program, and that YFPS' approval process for research activities be changed to meet the highest level of ethical research standards.

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The full report, *Phallometric Testing and B.C.'s Youth Justice System*, is available on the Representative's website (www.rcybc.ca).

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