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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sexual assault victims can now get SMART as part of their recovery

Surrey, B.C. – Victims of sexual assault in the Fraser Health region are now getting 24/7, 365-day-a-year SMART assistance the minute they reach out for help.

A partnership between Fraser Health and Surrey Women's Centre (SWC), the Surrey Mobile Assault Response Team (SMART) provides immediate, patient-centred support and services over the phone and in-person to anyone who has experienced a sexual or physical assault by a stranger or someone they know.

SMART is the only sexual assault mobile response program of its kind in Canada that works across multiple police jurisdictional boundaries with several hospitals and NGOs in a large geographic area.

SMART personally guides victims through the navigation of complex emergency medical, legal and social services. Reporting the incident to the police is not a requirement of SMART but a seven per cent increase in police reporting has resulted from victims using SMART. Since its establishment, the number of women and girls accessing SMART's services has doubled.

“Effectively what SMART does is build a safety net for victims through its connections with Community Based Victim Services (CBVS), streamlining the process and ensuring victims don't get caught up in the labyrinth of medical, legal and social services across various jurisdictional boundaries that creates all kinds of gaps and challenges for them,” said Lynn Gifford, coordinator of forensic nursing services for Surrey Memorial Hospital (SMH).

SMART was initially established in 2010 in response to international evidence of a spike in criminal activity – including violence against women and girls – during large-scale events such as the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

“SMART means that SWC can respond within minutes of the assault -- the earlier we intervene, the more effective the intervention. As a result, women and girls are less likely to get caught in a revolving door that places them at increased risk for serious

bodily injury or even death,” said Sonya Boyce, Surrey Women’s Centre executive director.

To find out more about SMART, go to <http://www.surreywomencentre.ca/smart/about> or call 604.583.1295.

Established in 1992, Surrey Women's Centre is a critical resource for women and children escaping domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. We lead innovative community responses that increase safety and support for women and children.
www.surreywomencentre.ca.

Surrey Memorial Hospital Foundation (SMHF) is fundraising for a new ER – currently the busiest in Western Canada and expected to be the most advanced in the country when it opens on Oct. 1, 2013. To find out more and/or to make a donation, go to www.smhfoundation.com.

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