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Statement of APA President Nada Stotland, M.D. on Abortion and Mental Health

(Arlington, VA – August 14, 2008) – A recently released report on mental health and abortion confirms the position of the American Psychiatric Association: abortion is not a risk to a woman’s mental health. APA President Nada Stotland, M.D., an expert on women’s mental health, made the following statement today:

“As we have known, there is no convincing evidence that abortion is a significant cause of psychiatric illness. We must distinguish illnesses from feelings. A woman may have many emotional reactions to an unwanted pregnancy and abortion - most commonly relief, but also sadness and a sense of loss. These feelings can coexist and, like feelings about any important life decision, they can vary over time. Negative feelings often stem from the circumstances that led the woman to terminate the pregnancy, such as an abusive relationship or a lack of social supports, or from the circumstances of the abortion itself such as demonstrators at an abortion facility. Women have abortions because they understand the importance of good mothering; they want to have wanted babies and to be able to give those babies what they need to grow up loved, healthy, and happy.

Each woman contemplating abortion has her own history, circumstances, and values; no one else can fully understand her individual situation. Every pregnant woman who is considering abortion has a right to accurate medical information about the risks and benefits of either continuing or terminating the pregnancy and to whatever medical and mental health care she wants and needs.

Decisions about reproductive health should be made between a woman, her family and her doctor. The best way to protect the mental health of women considering abortion is to ensure that they have accurate, unbiased information, receive good medical care, and are given support by family and friends whether they decide to continue or terminate their pregnancies.

The American Psychiatric Association opposes all constitutional amendments, legislation, and regulations restricting family planning and abortion services to any segment of the population.”

Read the [APA position statement](#) on abortion.

About the American Psychiatric Association: The American Psychiatric Association is the nation’s leading medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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