

# International FASD Awareness Day

On the ninth day, of the ninth month, communities around the world hold events to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Communities in BC are encouraged to come together on September 9<sup>th</sup> to raise awareness, to recognize the impact of FASD on families and children, and to identify ways we can better support each other.

This document is intended to support community organisations in engaging their communities in activities that will help to promote awareness and prevent FASD. In this document you will find:

## Promotion and Prevention Activities and Resources

- (1) Planning Activities
- (2) Suggestions for Prevention Activities
- (3) Q&As to help you be prepared if you are asked questions by the media
- (4) FASD resources and websites.

### WHY GET INVOLVED?

Prenatal alcohol exposure can cause a range of lifelong disabilities, and it is estimated that up to 1 in every 100 births is affected by exposure to alcohol. FASD can have many health, social, and economic costs, for the individual, their families, health and social service systems and communities.

FASD can be prevented! Getting involved in awareness raising activities helps bring local attention to the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy.

## **WHEN PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Some things to consider:

### **Be realistic**

When considering activities, think about the time and resources available. Start small and build on successes.

### **Talk to people**

Assess interest, and assemble a planning team that can brainstorm together. Seek out groups working on related issues.

### **Develop a timeline**

Work backwards to determine the steps needed to accomplish your goal. For each step ask "how long before September 9th must this be done?" Keep track of all deadlines on a calendar.

### **Make a concrete plan**

Everyone involved needs to be able to see how things are going and what should happen next. Write a detailed plan listing each step to be accomplished, who will do it, and by when. Make sure those involved support the plan and have a part to play in achieving it.

### **Reach out to decision-makers**

Assess whose approval or involvement you need, to make your project successful.

### **Welcome all voices**

Include people from different backgrounds, particularly those with FASD and their families.

### **Don't overdo it**

The single greatest pitfall for organizers is trying to do too much. Work with other groups, assign projects to volunteers, and make sure you have time for the other important aspects of your life.

### **Make it fun**

At every stage, from signing on volunteers to holding an event to doing cleanup, make it fun! Get creative (e.g., a tiny bell ringing, a pizza party mailing).. Sprinkle a dose of laughs into the mix. After the big day, celebrate...

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

There have been a number of successful events and activities hosted throughout the province to raise awareness of FASD. Some suggestions include:

- Use the media to get the word out by issuing a press release. A sample media release can be downloaded from [www.hcip-bc.org](http://www.hcip-bc.org) in our 'Community Service Directory' under 'Resources for Practice'. Or you can write an article or letter to the editor for the local newspaper.
- Wear lapel ribbons or FASD knots to get people asking and discussing the issues
- Coordinate FASD day activities with local schools. Organize moments of reflection and invite local FASD workers or public health nurses to provide educational sessions. Have a poster contest to get kids involved in the issue. Submit an article for the school newsletter
- Invite your local public health nurse or FASD worker to give an informal presentation to a community group.
- Promote non-alcoholic options by engaging clients in making refreshing mocktails and provide the recipes.
- Display posters prominently throughout the community including liquor and grocery stores.
- Send out an FASD quiz and informative email to your contacts. <http://www.come-over.to/multiplechoice/fasquizprintout.htm>
- Set up a display in local libraries or an information booth in malls
- Connect with local restaurants and bars to invite their participation in recognizing the day by providing free non-alcoholic drinks for patrons who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy. Offer promotional materials to highlight the event.
- Host a lunch-and-learn or informational coffee break at 9:09 AM.
- Ring bells on the 9th minute of the 9th hour of the 9th day of the 9th month (to bring awareness of avoiding alcohol use in the 9 months of pregnancy)

# FASD Day Q&A

## FASD Day Q&A

**1**  
What is  
FASD?

**2**  
How big a  
problem is  
FASD? How  
many people  
are affected in  
Canada?

**3**  
What has  
been proven  
to be  
effective in  
the  
prevention  
of FASD?

**4**  
What are  
the  
economic  
and social  
costs of  
FASD?

**5**  
What can  
communities  
do to help  
prevent  
FASD?

**6**  
How do I  
respond to  
people who  
say they have  
heard that it is  
okay for a  
woman to  
drink when  
she is  
pregnant?

**7**  
What is  
happening in  
BC to address  
FASD?

## **1 - What is FASD?**

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is an umbrella term used to describe the range of disabilities that can affect people who are exposed to alcohol prenatally. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause brain damage in a developing fetus, resulting in lifelong problems with attention, memory, reasoning and judgment. Pre-natal exposure to alcohol can also result in physical disabilities such as vision and hearing problems, slow growth, heart problems and bones that are not properly formed. There is great variability in the characteristics of those affected by FASD, depending on such factors as the amount and timing of the mother's drinking, mother's nutrition and overall health, as well as genetic factors.

## **2 - How big a problem is FASD? How many people are affected in Canada?**

It is estimated that every year, approximately 3000 babies are born in Canada with FASD. We do not know the exact numbers of people living with FASD as FASD is not always diagnosed, and we are still developing adequate resources to ensure individuals receive diagnosis and supports.

## **3 - What has been proven to be effective in the prevention of FASD?**

FASD can be prevented! Preventing FASD starts by increasing awareness of the harmful effects of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Communities can work together to ensure that all women receive support with pregnancy planning, are able to find alternatives to alcohol use during pregnancy, and have access to prenatal care. Some women may need extra support to cut back on their drinking. For these women, addictions treatment services that are easy to access, and which provide respectful and holistic care are key. And, after the baby is born, mothers may need support and advocacy to continue with the healthy changes they made during pregnancy.

## **4 - What are the economic and social costs of FASD?**

FASD can have many health, social, and economic costs, for the individual, their families, health and social service systems and communities. For families the extra costs for medical and other treatments are estimated to be approximately \$24,000 a year. It is estimated that the costs per individual over their lifetime for services can be over 1 million dollars. While many individuals with FASD lead fulfilling lives, many also have trouble with the law, drop out of school, have difficulties keeping a job, develop mental health problems, or become homeless.

## **5 - What can communities do to help prevent FASD?**

Communities can help prevent FASD in a number of ways, especially by helping to spread the word that it is safest not to drink during pregnancy. Friends and family members can all help a pregnant woman not to drink during pregnancy. If you work with women, learn about services in your community that can support women in avoiding alcohol use during pregnancy. Health care and social service providers can talk openly and supportively with women about drinking alcohol if they are pregnant or considering becoming pregnant and where to find support if they need assistance with avoiding alcohol during pregnancy. Bars can provide fun and tasty non-alcoholic options on their menu and liquor stores can hang posters with information about FASD.

## **6 - How do I respond to people who say they have heard that it is okay for a woman to drink when she is pregnant?**

Heavy drinking during pregnancy (either binge drinking or chronic use of alcohol) is clearly the most likely to cause harm to the fetus, as well as to a woman's health. While very low levels of drinking such as one drink a week is unlikely to cause harm, it is not possible to know a safe level of drinking for any particular woman. We do know that alcohol can be harmful to fetal development, which is why health professionals recommend that it is safest not to drink during pregnancy.

## 7 - What is happening in BC to address FASD?

BC has a 10 year Provincial Plan entitled Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Building on Strengths. It provides a framework to guide provincial, regional and community efforts to address FASD over the next decade. The document can be located at [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/pdf/FASD\\_TenYearPlan\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/pdf/FASD_TenYearPlan_WEB.pdf)

**Diagnostic and assessment services** are available for children and youth through the regional health authorities in partnership with the Provincial Health Services Authority. The assessment teams are multidisciplinary and are designed for children and youth who have significant difficulties in multiple areas of function including development and learning, mental health, and adaptive and social skills. For more information, please see website link <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/assessment.htm>

The Ministry of Children and Family Development provides **support for families** with children with suspected or confirmed FASD through the Key Worker and Parent Support Program. Key workers assist families in understanding FASD by providing education and information specific to the needs of the child and family. They are familiar with community resources, assist families in accessing support, health and education services and are involved in the development of local support services. They also provide emotional and practical support to families. The Program is provided by contracted agencies located in each of the five MCFD regions. For more information, please visit: [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/kw\\_support.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/kw_support.htm)

**Children and youth with FASD** sometimes qualify and benefit from other services and programs for children with special needs such as the Infant Development Program and early intervention services. For more information on the wide range of services and program available, please see [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec\\_needs/index.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/index.htm)

The Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (POPFASD) is funded by the Ministry of Education. The mandate is to **support teachers** of students with FASD by explaining the educational implications of FASD.

POPFASD shares current FASD research, resources and successful practices and provides a network for teachers and others. Through consultation with teachers and experts in the field of FASD, POPFASD developed a website to provide information, e-learning modules and resources for teachers. The website link is: <http://www.fasdoutreach.ca>

**Adults with a confirmed diagnosis of FASD** who have significant challenges with day-to-day living (adaptive functioning) can benefit from the Personalized Supports Initiative which is delivered by Community Living BC. The PSI provides an individualised and personalized approach to meeting the needs of eligible adults by coordinating existing community supports to help people to maintain or increase their independence. More information can be found at: [http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/what\\_we\\_do/personalized\\_supports\\_initiative.htm](http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/what_we_do/personalized_supports_initiative.htm)

The BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs (BCAPOPOP), with programs in over 120 B.C. communities (including on reserve Aboriginal communities) provide **prenatal and early parenting support to women** who experience health or lifestyle challenges during pregnancy, birth and the transition to parenting. This includes assisting women in accessing substance use treatment and FASD diagnostic services when needed. <http://www.bcapop.ca/>

The Public Health Agency of Canada, BC Region (PHAC) funds three programs: Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and Aboriginal Head Start off reserve (AHS) who work in the area of **Early Childhood Development (0-6)**. PHAC is currently working with representatives of the province of BC on priorities for working with families impacted by FASD, as identified in a March 2010 consultation. For the March 2010 summary report on these priorities please contact: [colleen\\_wickenheiser@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:colleen_wickenheiser@phac-aspc.gc.ca).

## FASD RESOURCES

The BC Liquor Distribution Board has new 2010 pamphlets and posters available for ordering or downloading at: <http://www.bliquorstores.com/alcohol-pregnancy>

The following resources may of interest to those who wish to refer to current Canadian material about approaches to preventing FASD:

BC Provincial FASD Plan

[http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/pdf/FASD\\_TenYearPlan\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/pdf/FASD_TenYearPlan_WEB.pdf)

BC Health Files. (2008). *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*. Province of British Columbia.

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile38e.stm>

BC Health Files. (2006). *Pregnancy and Alcohol Use*. Province of British Columbia.

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile38d.stm>

Best Start. (2002). *Reducing the Impact: working with pregnant women who live in difficult life situations*. Toronto, ON: Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre [http://www.beststart.org/resources/anti\\_poverty/pdf/REDUCE.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/anti_poverty/pdf/REDUCE.pdf)

Best Start. (2003). *Keys to a successful alcohol and pregnancy communication campaign*. Toronto, ON: Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre. <http://www.beststart.org/apcampaign/index.html>.

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2001). *Respect is key to helping pregnant women with substance use problems: a conversation with Pam Woodsworth* <http://www.ccsa.ca/2003%20and%20earlier%20CCSA%20Documents/ccsa-008861-2001.pdf>

FASD Network Action Team on FASD

Prevention from a Women's Health Determinants Perspective (2010). *10 Fundamental components of FASD prevention from a women's health determinants perspective*. <http://www.canfasd.ca/networkActionTeams/womens-health-determinants.aspx>

FASD Network Action Team on FASD Prevention from a Women's Health Determinants Perspective (2009). *Taking a relational approach: the importance of timely and supportive connections for women*. <http://www.canfasd.ca/networkActionTeams/womens-health-determinants.aspx>

FASD Network Action Team on FASD Prevention from a Women's Health Determinants Perspective. (2007). *Barriers to accessing support for pregnant women and mothers with substance use problems*. <http://www.canfasd.ca/networkActionTeams/womens-health-determinants.aspx>

Poole, N. (2008). *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Prevention: Canadian Perspectives*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/pdf/cp-pc-eng.pdf>

Poole, N., Urquhart, C., Pitman, L., & Advisory Committee. (2008). *Women and Alcohol: A women's health resource*. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. <http://www.hcip-bc.org/resources-forwomen/documents/BCCEWHWomenAlcoholBrochureLR.pdf>

## WEBSITES

Selected websites of national and BC provincial organizations working on FASD are included here. Many local groups have also developed excellent websites.

Asante Centre [www.asantecentre.org](http://www.asantecentre.org)

BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs [www.bcapop.ca](http://www.bcapop.ca)

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse – FASD [www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Topics/Populations/FetalAlcoholSpectrum/Pages/default](http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Topics/Populations/FetalAlcoholSpectrum/Pages/default).

Canada Northwest FASD Partnership <http://www.cnfasdpartnership.ca/>

Canada Northwest FASD Research Network (CanFASD) [www.canfasd.ca](http://www.canfasd.ca)

FASD Connections [www.fasdconnection.ca/id25.htm](http://www.fasdconnection.ca/id25.htm)

Health Canada – First Nations, Inuit and Aboriginal Health <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spnia/famil/preg-gros/intro-eng.php>

Healthy Choices in Pregnancy [www.hcip-bc.org](http://www.hcip-bc.org)

Motherisk <http://www.motherisk.org/women/index.jsp>

Ministry of Children and Family Development <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd/index>

Provincial Outreach Program for FASD (Ministry of Education) [www.fasdoutreach.ca](http://www.fasdoutreach.ca)

Public Health Agency of Canada [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/index-eng](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/index-eng)

White Crow Village [www.whitecrowvillage.org/](http://www.whitecrowvillage.org/)

This package of information was gathered by representatives of the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport; Public Health Agency of Canada; and BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre.

Support from the BC Liquor Distribution Branch, in the form of access to posters and pamphlets is appreciated.

We would like to acknowledge the previous work of a CPNP Advisory Committee who in 2005 developed a comprehensive International FASD Awareness Day package available at [www.nfhs-pg.org/](http://www.nfhs-pg.org/)

For further information or follow-up, please contact: Colleen Wickenheiser, FASD Lead, Program Consultant, Public Health Agency of Canada at [colleen\\_wickenheiser@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:colleen_wickenheiser@phac-aspc.gc.ca).

The views expressed in the above websites do not necessarily represent the views of the BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, the Public Health Agency of Canada or the Government of British Columbia.