

Let's Talk

The Prevention Conversation

It's time to talk about alcohol and pregnancy



Exposure to alcohol can impact **fetal brain and body development**, which can be affected by the timing of exposure, the amount of alcohol consumed, genetic makeup, and maternal nutrition.

There is **no safe time, type, or amount** of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

FASD Prevention

A supportive environment and community are key to avoiding alcohol during pregnancy.

FASD can be prevented, but FASD prevention is complex and involves much more than just raising awareness of the risks of drinking during pregnancy.

Prevention includes:

- raising awareness among the entire public
- accessible supportive services
- having safe discussions with women and girls of childbearing years
- supporting new and postpartum parents

Foundations in FASD

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (**FASD**) is a **diagnostic term** used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals **prenatally exposed to alcohol**. FASD is a **lifelong disability**. People with FASD **experience some degree of challenges** in their daily life, and often need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. **Each individual with FASD is unique** and has areas of both strengths and challenges.

**FASD impacts
4%
of people in
Canada**

1.5 million
people in Canada
= approx. 174,000
people in Alberta
1 in 25
people in Canada

FASD Diagnosis

Early diagnosis can lead to improved supports



An individual is usually assessed by a multidisciplinary team of experts, typically including:

- » Medical practitioner,
- » Psychologist,
- » Speech language pathologist

As of 2015*, there are two FASD diagnoses in Canada:



FASD with sentinel facial features



FASD without sentinel facial features

An individual may also be given an “at risk for neurodevelopmental disorder and FASD, associated with prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE)” designation, which is non-diagnostic, but indicates the individual will require future follow-up and support.

* Prior to 2015, individuals could be diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), partial FAS (pFAS), or Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)



We want to make sure the language we're using doesn't perpetuate stigma for people with FASD, their families, and people who are pregnant and/or using substances.

The language we use should be:

- Strengths-based,
- Person-first,
- Evidence-based, and
- Dignity-promoting

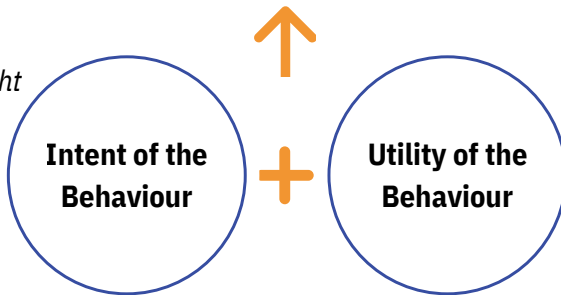
Underlying Causes of Behaviour

It is critical to remember that **all behaviour is functional**, meaning the behaviours we see are intended to help meet a need, even when it's not obvious to us what that is.

What we can see...

Observed Behaviour

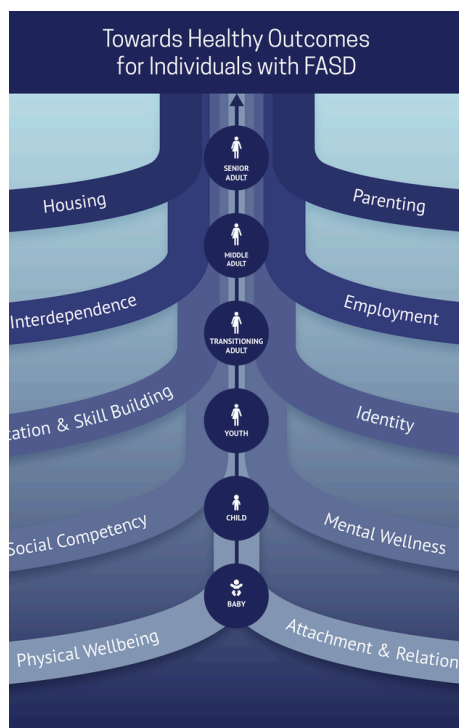
What we might miss: the underlying causes of behaviour...



Towards Healthy Outcomes

FASD is a lifelong, whole-body disorder and comorbidities are extremely common. A person may face unique challenges at different stages in their life.

Towards Healthy Outcomes offers a framework for intervention and goal setting across the lifespan. It can help guide supports as they walk alongside individuals with FASD to achieve success, however it looks for them. Towards Healthy Outcomes helps us to think holistically, collaborate, and use assessment and intervention planning to connect supports with healthy functioning goals.



Recognizing Needs

FASD often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed which can make recognizing areas of need and support hard, especially in young children. This means that many people with FASD are often diagnosed in school or as teenagers, and many people are diagnosed in adulthood.

ALARMS is a tool that can help identify someone as needing extra support. ALARMS stands for:

- ▲ **Adaptive Behaviours:** How a person relates to the world around them. For people with FASD challenges can look like trouble stopping or starting tasks, or needing lots of structure and rules to stay on task.
- ▶ **Language:** How a person communicates. For people with FASD, they often have great expressive language skills, but they can struggle with their receptive language.
- ▼ **Attention:** How a person manages their attention, finishes tasks, and deals with distractions. For people with FASD, they can have trouble staying on task and paying attention.
- ▲ **Reasoning:** How a person understands abstract ideas and problem solving. For people with FASD, they can struggle with reading comprehension, math, and science and ideas related to time and money.
- ▶ **Memory:** How a person retains information. For people with FASD, this might look like repeating the same mistakes or not remembering what they learned yesterday.
- ▼ **Sensory Processing Difficulties:** How a person manages sensory input, organization, and output. For people with FASD, this can look like being over or understimulated in their environment.