



What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) includes Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Effects, Alcohol Related Birth Defects and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders. FASD is the term used to represent all the harmful effects of alcohol on the unborn child.

Prenatal alcohol exposure is now recognized as the leading known cause of disability in Canada. It can cause adaptive and behavioural difficulties, physical, psychological and learning disabilities, and is strongly associated with mental health disorders.

In Canada at least 1 – 2 babies out of 100 are affected by alcohol use.

With Support From



For training, education, support and information or to set up a non-medical FASD assessment contact:

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



Information for police officers, probation officers, lawyers and judges

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Have you ever arrested someone for a break and enter because you could follow their footprints in the snow?

Have you ever arrested someone repeatedly for the same type of crime and the person was actually happy to see you?

Have you ever arrested someone for a serious crime and the person had no understanding of what the big problem was?

Often it is hard to know if someone has FASD.

Think about this...

If a person won't cooperate, consider

They simply may not understand or cannot put verbal directions into action.

If they are a repeat offender, consider

They are easily led by others.

If they are lying, consider

They may be filling in the blanks, have problems with memory and sequencing, and may be telling you what they think you want to hear.

If they steal, consider

They have the same functional capacities of a normal eight year old.

If they act like they just don't care, consider

They are defensive, hurt, abused and frustrated.

Strategies to keep in mind

- Be cognizant of the limited capacities and special needs and make all necessary adjustments.
- Ensure that victims and witnesses are interviewed as soon as possible as there are often memory impairments with FASD clients. Enlist the assistance of caregivers, social or health workers whenever possible.
- Videotape and/or audiotape all statements and interviews.
- Ask open-ended questions. Say, "Where were you yesterday?" as opposed to "Were you at the Fire Hall yesterday?". FASD affected individuals are often very willing to please and may answer your questions the way they believe you want them to.



- When releasing prisoners or when dealing with victims and witnesses of diminished capacity, endeavor to release them into the charge of a caregiver, custodian or parent for their own protection and understanding of the law.
- Ensure that the Crown Attorney is aware that you think this individual has FASD.



Strategies to Keep in Mind adapted from Section 2.2 of the RCMP FASD Training Guide by Constable Annette Laporte of RCMP "O" Division, Windsor Detachment and Terralyn Mckee of The Pas Family Resource Centre, www.asantecentre.org/pdf/latestfasguide.pdf