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**Here is what you will find in our 12th Edition ...**

- A message from Darlene Carifelle, Metis Settlements Provincial Service Network Coordinator
- Northwest Peace FASD update
- FASD Myths
- Diagnosis Is Not A Label
- Key Things to Remember
- Did You Know?
- CANFASD Opportunities
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A developing fetus is highly sensitive to alcohol at any stage of pregnancy, and there is **no known safe threshold.**



Tansi,

In a world where success is often measured by awards and achievements, it's time to honor the true champions—the kids who didn't win an award or make the honor roll but showed incredible resilience to make it through the school year, and the caregivers who stood by them every step of the way.

Your journey is marked by challenges that many may never understand. Yet, you navigate through the school systems with courage and determination, despite the lack of understanding of FASD. Your resilience and perseverance are nothing short of inspiring.

Caregivers, your unwavering support, patience, and love form the bedrock of these remarkable journeys. You are the silent heroes who celebrate every small victory, who offer comfort in times of struggle, and who tirelessly advocate for your children's needs. Your dedication ensures that these children have the opportunity to thrive, even when the path is steep and uncharted.

As the school year draws to a close, let's amplify our applause for these extraordinary caregivers and kids. Your journey may not always be easy, but your strength and resilience light the way for others.

Wishing you all an amazing and safe summer ahead!

With Respect,  
**Darlene Carifelle**  
*Metis Settlements Provincial  
Service Network Coordinator*  
[dcarifelle@msgc.ca](mailto:dcarifelle@msgc.ca)





Northwest Peace FASD

## Northwest Peace FASD Network

### Diagnostic Services

The Northwest Peace FASD Network has a multi-disciplinary team that meets the standards required in FASD Assessment and Diagnostic Services. The mobile diagnostic clinic travels around the entire NW region with clinics being held in High Prairie, Peace River, Grande Cache and Grande Prairie. We provide multi-disciplinary assessments for children, youth and adults who are suspected of prenatal alcohol exposure. Our diagnostic and intervention teams also provide referrals and recommendations for follow-up support and aftercare.

Check out the **Caregiver Guide to Diagnosis – click below.**

[Click to access CanFASD-Caregiver-Guide-to-Diagnosis-Jan2020-interactive.pdf](#)

Two important things for you to know:

***The support services are for children, youth, and adults.  
A diagnosis is not needed to be eligible for support services.***

If you have questions about the diagnostic process or would like to make a referral to the clinic, please contact the diagnostic clinic coordinator.

**Michelle Perron, Diagnostic Coordinator:** [michelle@nwfasd.ca](mailto:michelle@nwfasd.ca)

**780-533-5444**

The Metis Settlements each have their own FASD Mentors that can assist individuals with the referral process, paperwork, and support for diagnostic services. Please reach out to your local contact if you would like to access support services.

### Metis Settlement Local Contacts:

#### **FASD Mentor, Gift Lake Metis Settlement:** Marge Cunningham

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD supports and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the Gift Lake Metis Settlement. Email: [marge@giftlakemetis.ca](mailto:marge@giftlakemetis.ca)

#### **FASD Mentor, Peavine Metis Settlement:** Valerie Donison

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD supports and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the Peavine Metis Settlement. Email: [valerie.donison@peavinemetis.com](mailto:valerie.donison@peavinemetis.com)

#### **FASD Mentor, East Prairie Metis Settlement:** Donna Grier

The FASD Mentor is a combination of FASD supports and PCAP Mentor Program. Offering services to individuals and families within the East Prairie Metis Settlement. Email: [donna@cpms.ca](mailto:donna@cpms.ca)

# FASD Myths

## **Myth 1: FASD only affects babies born to alcoholic mothers.**

**Fact:** While alcohol consumption during pregnancy is a significant risk factor, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) can occur even with minimal alcohol exposure. Genetics, metabolism, and timing of alcohol consumption during pregnancy all play roles in its development.

## **Myth 2: FASD is always visible at birth.**

**Fact:** FASD can present with a wide range of physical, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms, not all of which are immediately apparent. Some effects may only become noticeable as the child grows older and encounters challenges in learning and behavior.

## **Myth 3: FASD is solely a behavioral issue.**

**Fact:** While behavioral challenges are common in individuals with FASD, the disorder can also manifest with physical abnormalities, intellectual disabilities, and difficulties with executive functioning, memory, and social skills.

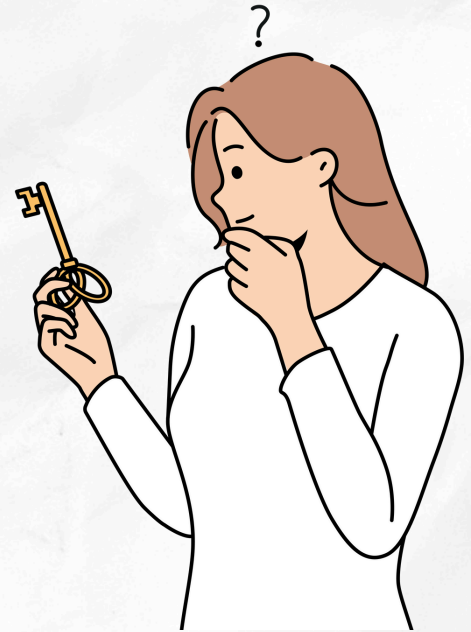
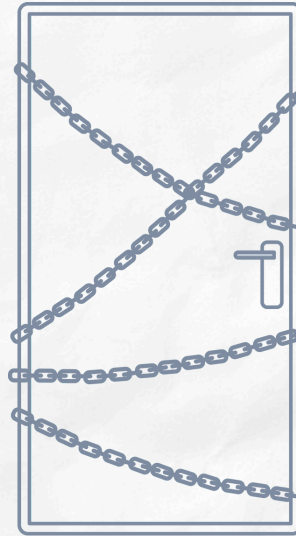
## **Myth 4: FASD can be cured or outgrown.**

**Fact:** FASD is a lifelong condition, but with early diagnosis and appropriate interventions, individuals can learn strategies to manage their symptoms and lead fulfilling lives. However, there is no cure for FASD, and the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure persist into adulthood.

## **Myth 5: FASD is rare.**

**Fact:** FASD is more common than previously thought, with estimates suggesting that it affects up to 1 in 100 births worldwide. However, due to underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis, many individuals with FASD may go unrecognized and untreated. Early identification and support are crucial for improving outcomes for individuals with FASD.

# Diagnosis Is Not A Label. It's A **KEY** To The Door Of **Understanding.**



Imagine a key that doesn't just open a door but unlocks a world of understanding and support. That's what a diagnosis can be for individuals living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). **It's not merely a label; it's a vital tool that opens doors to tailored interventions, empathy, and a community of understanding.**

FASD, a condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure, often hides in the shadows, misunderstood and overlooked. But a diagnosis shines a light, revealing the complexities of this disorder and guiding us toward better support and care.

Think of diagnosis as a compass, pointing us in the right direction to understand the unique needs and challenges of individuals with FASD. **It provides clarity, dispelling misconceptions and stigma, and fostering empathy and acceptance.**

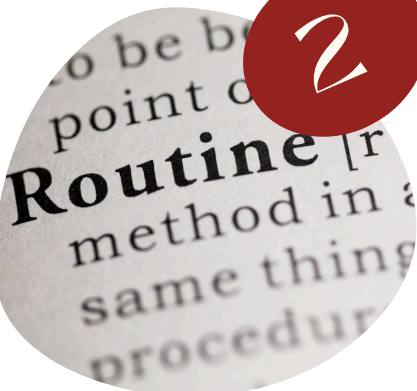
With a diagnosis, we can tailor interventions and support strategies, helping individuals with FASD thrive in their own unique way.

**It's not about fitting into predefined boxes; it's about celebrating strengths, acknowledging limitations, and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.**

# KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS With FASD

Individuals with FASD may have challenges impacting behavior, learning, and social interactions.

**Patience and understanding are crucial as they may require more time to process information and adapt to changes,** which can greatly impact their comfort and success.



**Establishing a consistent routine for individuals with FASD promotes security, predictability, and reduces anxiety.** Consistent schedules, rules, and clear communication of changes in advance are beneficial for navigating their environment effectively.

**Focusing on strengths rather than challenges can boost the confidence and self-esteem of individuals with FASD.** Celebrate their achievements, no matter how small they may seem. Recognize and praise their efforts, resilience, and progress. Positive reinforcement encourages them to continue striving and highlights their potential.





# DID YOU KNOW?

- Despite its prevalence, FASD is often misdiagnosed or overlooked entirely. Many healthcare professionals and educators are not adequately trained to recognize the signs of FASD, leading to children being mislabeled with ADHD, autism, or other behavioral disorders. This lack of awareness means that many individuals with FASD do not receive the specific support and interventions they need.
- Alcohol is one of the most harmful substances a fetus can be exposed to during pregnancy. Unlike many other drugs, alcohol can cause a wide range of severe and permanent developmental issues, including brain damage, growth deficiencies, and behavioral problems. The pervasive impact of alcohol on fetal development makes it uniquely dangerous.
- Many individuals with FASD do not exhibit physical signs of the disorder, making it an "invisible disability." This can lead to significant misunderstandings and challenges in getting appropriate support. People with FASD often struggle with cognitive functions, memory, and social interactions, which are not immediately apparent, leading to misjudgments about their capabilities and behaviors.
- The lifetime cost of caring for an individual with FASD can reach millions of dollars. This includes medical care, special education, social services, and lost productivity. The overall economic burden on society is immense, emphasizing the importance of prevention, early diagnosis, and support for affected individuals and their families.

GET ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & SUPPORT

 [www.metissettlementsfasd.ca](http://www.metissettlementsfasd.ca)



Did you know? CanFASD developed a standard definition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (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.**

This definition can help to:

- Reduce stigma
- Increase consistency in practice
- Improve knowledge and understanding of FASD
- Change the perspective of FASD to focus on strengths.

Understanding FASD as a Lifelong Disability

Individuals with FASD face daily challenges, and require assistance with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential.

**It's important to note that each person with FASD has unique strengths and challenges.**



# Opportunities

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The Canada FASD Research Network offers many online learning courses for individuals seeking more learning opportunities at home.

[www.canfasd.ca](http://www.canfasd.ca)

## Basic FASD Learning

This course is intended \_for everyone\_\*\* that will come into contact with individuals with FASD including all sectors of work, families, individuals with FASD, spouses, and the general public

## Sector/Special Interest FASD Training

Advanced training courses for:

- All administrators, teachers, educational assistants, ECE's, office admin, Board personnel and bus drivers
- Front-line service providers in many fields including mental health, addictions, corrections, shelters, literacy and adult education programs.
- Professionals in the Justice systems
- Professionals in the Solicitor General systems

## The Prevention Conversation

A training program for front-line health and social services professionals, to provide them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence when engaging with their clients/patients.



**Did you know that 1.5 million  
Canadians have FASD?**

Learn more about this disability through  
online courses.

<https://estore.canfasd.ca/foundations-in-fasd>



**CanFASD  
Online Learning**

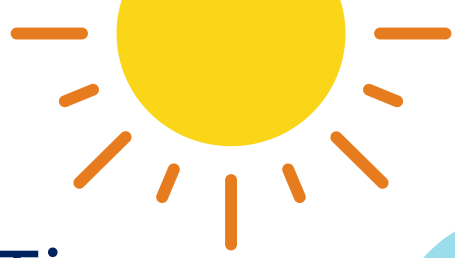
www.canfasd.ca

**Online courses to improve your  
understanding of fetal alcohol  
spectrum disorder (FASD).**

- ✓ Sector-specific courses
- ✓ Evidence-based information
- ✓ Work at your own pace
- ✓ One-year access to course materials
- ✓ Certificate upon completion



**CanFASD**  
CANADA FASD RESEARCH NETWORK



## Summer Tips

# FOR CAREGIVERS



**This summer, remember to take time for self-care, embrace flexibility, and celebrate the small victories.**

### **Structured Routine:**

Maintain a consistent daily routine to provide stability and predictability. Create a visual schedule to help keep track of daily activities.

### **Plan Ahead**

Prepare for outings by researching and visiting new places ahead of time. Familiarize your child with the location through photos or videos.

### **Flexible Expectations:**

Be flexible with plans and have backup options. Understand that some days might be more challenging than others.

### **Social Skills Practice:**

Use the summer break to work on social skills in low-pressure environments. Playdates with understanding friends or family can be beneficial.

A sunset over a body of water with reeds in the foreground. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and water. The reeds are silhouetted against the bright light, creating a dramatic contrast. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

**In a world that  
often  
misunderstands,  
be the voice that  
speaks with  
compassion,  
patience, and  
understanding for  
those with FASD.**