

FASD NEWS

A COMPILATION OF CURRENT EVENTS
WINTER 2006

FASD Centre
at the
Regina Community Clinic

The FASD Centre at the Regina Community Clinic is dedicated to helping people in Southern Saskatchewan who are living with the effects of FASD. FASD is a disability that impacts every community. If you think we can help, or have questions, call 306-543-7880 x268.

MEETING NEEDS?

During the time The FASD Centre has been in service we've met many people who are impacted by FASD. We've met with families, foster parents, single parents, and individuals with FASD. We've listened and heard their stories.

We are keenly aware that FASD is only one of a number of disabilities that profoundly affect an individual's life however, those who live with FASD continue to sit apart from those with different disabilities. For the majority of people with FASD their disability is invisible. The majority does not display physical signs that can alert others to their needs. The extent of this cognitive disability is complex; it is a broad spectrum of abilities and of disabilities. Too often they live unnoticed, mistreated, and misunderstood. As they become adults they often live without a permanent address, without a phone, without their medications, and without support.

We've met many youth with FASD who are engaging, likable, and lonely. Their abilities are too frequently forgotten – some demonstrate great artistic talent, others write. Some are cooks and some are athletes. Others tell great jokes, and others hold jobs.

We've met with families that are extraordinary. Our definition of family is broad – there are caregivers who are retired grandparents, biological parents, siblings, cousins, and adoptive parents. Their courage and strength, their humour and their faith, encourage us as they face constant challenges to ensure their children's be safety and health. These 'families' are also often exhausted, frightened, and too frequently discouraged by society's perception of their children.

People with FASD are exceedingly vulnerable to the addictive properties of drugs or alcohol. They are emotionally vulnerable making them easy targets for gangs and abuse. Parents want their children, regardless of age, to have the best options and chances for happiness. They want to see their children reach their potential. It's just harder to find the options and the chances when your child lives with a disability like FASD.

cognitive disability strategy (CDS)

The CDS is up and operating in Regina. The intent of the CDS is to offer families or individuals living with cognitive disabilities support. For more information about the CDS call:

Ryan Labatt, Community Consultant at Ehrlo Community Services at **751-5659**

confused about FASD assessments? ... answers to frequently asked questions:

What is an FASD assessment?

An assessment for FASD requires a psychologist/neuropsychologist assessment **and** a medical assessment to determine if FASD is the correct diagnosis. FASD is a medical diagnosis. The Canadian Medical Association has FASD guidelines listing required psychological tests and physical guidelines for physicians. We need to know how the brain and the body may be impacted by exposure to pre-natal alcohol exposure.

Can any physician complete an FASD assessment?

Any physician can suspect the existence of FASD, but to properly diagnose it's recommended that the physician complete specific training for FASD diagnosis.

Can any psychological testing be OK?

The effect of pre-natal alcohol on the brain can impact different domains of brain function. To best understand an individual's abilities and deficits each domain needs to be tested. The effect of pre-natal alcohol on a brain can be wide-ranging and complex.

Why do you need social and medical history for an FASD assessment?

Social history is important because it offers insight into how an individual may be coping within society – what patterns of behaviour exist? Many people with FASD have a history of behaviours: poor school attendance, homelessness, poverty, lack of employment, poor decision-making, inability to solve problems, weak or erratic memory, and so on.

Family medical history is required to determine if there is a pre-existing genetic condition that may 'appear' as FASD. Birth history is important because we chart growth patterns.

Does FASD really exist?

Yes – FASD exists. It's most recently been researched since the 1970's however; historians have documented it for about 5000 years. There continue to be people who are unable to accept its existence, and people who deny that alcohol can have negative effects upon a fetus.

FAE, FAS, PFAS..... what's the difference?

As medical research continues the terminology has changed in the same way that it has shifted with other disabilities. FASD is an umbrella term used to capture the 4 diagnoses: FAS, pFAS, ARND, ARBD. Each of these diagnoses has specific criteria.

FAE is the historic term used to refer to people who did not have the physical signs of pre-natal alcohol exposure, and FAS referred to people with the physical signs. Researchers today have refined the diagnosis to the four listed above. However, whether someone is identified as having FAS, pFAS, ARBD or ARND – the most critical thing to remember is that invisible brain damage exists in all of the diagnosis.

How do I arrange for an FASD assessment?

There are two options: if the assessment is for a child or youth, you can call intake at Child and Youth for information and they will answer any questions you have for the services they provide. The contact number is **766-6762**.

If you are seeking an assessment for a child, youth or adult, you can call The FASD Centre at **543-7880 x268**. The coordinator can answer your questions and can book all necessary appointments, and follow-up.

Update - supported housing project

Lisa Brownstone - Project Consultant

Work continues around implementation of the supported housing option. Last December, 26 people from agencies representing supports to families, people with disabilities, housing, (emergency, transitional, supported and independent) employment, mental health, corrections, counselling, addictions, and health care met. They explored present services to people with FASD, the gaps in service, and the obstacles existing in current services and strategies and discussed ways for better meeting needs and improving services. The group endorsed the recommendations from the "Feasibility Study into Housing for People with FASD". In particular, the supported housing model was endorsed. The group felt that housing and supports had to be tied together. Additionally there was strong support for approaching the housing authorities and asking for 5% of the non-senior social housing stock to be designated for supported housing for people with FASD and mental health needs.

Since then the focus has been on the development of a pilot project to learn how to implement the supported housing model. Regina Housing Authority has indicated that they might be interested in a partnership where they would provide the housing, and the pilot would provide the supports. A number of potential funding opportunities are also being pursued. It is hoped that by the end of this project (March 31, 2006) plans for the pilot will be well underway.

upcoming events:

Ongoing: On the last **Wednesday** morning of each month the local FASD community network meeting is hosted by 4-Directions Community Clinic in north central. This network is a group of approximately 20 agencies and individuals that sit down to discuss FASD concerns and information. If you are interested in attending please contact Lisa Workman at 766-7540, or Dawn Beattie at 787-1303.

Ongoing: 'Parent/Caregiver Gathering' is held on the 4th Thursday of each month in Fort Qu'Appelle at the All Nations' Healing Hospital. For information call Karen at 306-332-2639.

February 16 and 17th – Two workshops for concrete language skill development for caregivers and professionals. For more information contact Cheryl at 543.7880 x.268.

March 8 – Ehrlo Community Services is hosting an evening information session at Albert Scott Community Centre from 6:30- 8:00PM. FASD: Come and Learn. No charge.

March 16-17: SARC presents Leadership Within Person-Centred Work, facilitated by John O'Brien, in Lumdsen. Contact Diana Braun in Saskatoon for information at 933-0616

March 15 – Spring FASD Awareness Day. More details to follow.

May 17 – 19 2006: Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership Conference: Sharing our stories, strengthening our supports, supporting our circle. To be hosted in Regina at Queensbury Convention Centre. Visit www.cnfaspartnership.ca for information and updates.

June 25 – 27 2006: Delta Bessborough Hotel – Saskatoon: 11th Biennial Violence and Aggression Symposium. Sessions include FASD research, gang violence, and mental disorders. Call Saskatoon at 966-5575 or check the web for updates and information at www.extension.usaskca/go/VA



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