NOVEMBER 2023 | www.neafan.ca

# EXPERTISE and EMPATHY

NEAFAN

Northeast Alberta FASD Network

# Evidence in Action

### Empathy and Expertise for Beneficial Outcomes

Children diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) exhibit a disproportionate presence within the child welfare system, as research estimates indicate a prevalence ranging from 3% to 11% among this population.
The primary objective of the child welfare system is to ensure the safety of children while concurrently striving to enhance their general well-being. In contrast, individuals diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) face a unique array of difficulties and are at a heightened risk for unfavourable consequences, including but not limited to homelessness, substance misuse, psychological disorders, and diminished academic achievement.
The Canadian child welfare system encounters a significant problem in the provision of care for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). It is customary for these children to have unfavourable consequences; as a result, individuals involved in their care necessitate augmented training to effectively offer suitable assistance.

Despite the very important nature of acknowledging Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), a significant number of childcare workers exhibit a deficiency in the requisite knowledge and experience required to comprehend this

condition. Due to the presence of this information deficit, children who are affected may encounter a lack of adequate assistance, hence intensifying the challenges they already face in their lives.
The presence of social workers and allied health professionals is crucial in delivering therapy that is influenced by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). However, it is necessary to enhance their training and support to effectively address the intricate requirements of these children and their families. Increased knowledge, training, and support are required of social workers and other professionals who work in the child welfare system in order for them to meet the requirements of persons who have FASD and the requirements of their families.

> "Due to this knowledge deficit, impacted children may not receive enough assistance, compounding their problems."

Frequently, our clients and caregivers are dealing with serious problems, such as job loss, illness, poverty, or discrimination, and they need our full attention and strategic coordination of services.

It is crucial to lay a firm foundation that will enable the attainment of beneficial outcomes to guarantee the therapy's success. Intervention tactics may be made more effective by incorporating a complete evaluation that indicates a thorough understanding of the client's situation, increasing the sustainability of desired outcomes.

# Whole Life-Course Supports Are Essential.

### More Research and Fact-Based Policies are Needed.

The implementation of the National Framework on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Act is expected to yield enhanced care and improved outcomes for individuals diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

To avoid adverse childhood events that lead to additional FASD, children with FASD need permanent, early, and long-term safe placements. Interdisciplinary, collaborative, systems-based, and multi-level solutions are needed to support FASD adolescents and teens, who often have several workers.

Early childhood, emerging adults, and maturity require case management and planning. As part of evaluation, action, and assistance, whole Life-course supports are essential.

Creating and maintaining stable systems is crucial for the child and family. Alcohol-exposed pregnant women and suspected FASD clients should be tested, examined, and identified. Working with children in need of safety requires training to screen and refer for FASD diagnosis. Foster parents, adoptive parents, group homes, and other residential care and healthcare professionals require greater training to treat FASD. A Life-Course approach is necessary to examine how changes and developmental routes impact FASD in children and teenagers, particularly those placed in foster, adoptive, or residential care away from their parents.

More research and fact-based policies are needed for youth exiting child protection. Social workers are crucial to child safety and should advocate for FASD-informed training for students and professionals. Such a comprehensive strategy will enhance case management, consultation, and support services for those affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

"A Life-course approach is necessary to examine how changes and developmental routes impact FASD."

Canada FASD Conference 2023
November 7-9, 2023 • Saskatoon, SK

# Canada FASD Conference

The first-ever Canada FASD Conference was held at TCU Place in Saskatoon from November 7 to 9. This sold-out event brought together over 500 researchers, caregivers, individuals with FASD, policymakers and professionals to share what they know about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

At this sold-out event current trends in the field of FASD were highlighted at the conference, by researchers, service providers and clinicians, and people with lived experience to help attendees gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and possibilities facing fields like youth with complex needs, diagnosis and assessment, prevention, the justice system, school-based supports, health care, among others.

FASD is Canada's leading known cause of neurodevelopmental disability. Its complexity requires interdisciplinary connection, as FASD intersects with fields like justice, education, social services, health care, psychology, homelessness, substance use, mental wellness, child welfare, and more.

NEAFAN
Northeast Alberta FASD Network

## Connect

Website: www.neafan.ca

Facebook: @neafanfasd

Instagram: @neafanfm

Twitter: @neafanfm

## Links & Resources

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Child Welfare
- Contact NEAFAN