DECEMBER 2023 | www.neafan.ca

Community Involvement

NEAFAN

Northeast Alberta FASD Network

Community Based Initiatives.

Partner and Community Involvement in FASD Prevention.

Indigenous groups have been in the forefront of creating cooperative, culturally appropriate strategies to manage alcohol consumption during pregnancy in various regions of the world. These methods acknowledge the cultural, historical, social, political, and economic aspects of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Additionally, they strive to advance the general health and wellbeing of Indigenous women.Individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) may have intellectual challenges, behavioural issues, and physical health issues that last a lifetime. For families, groups, and communities interested in learning how to support FASD prevention in Indigenous communities in ways that honour history, are culturally appropriate, and encourage Indigenous self-determination and cultural resurgence, a good place to start is with a succinct overview of community-led programs that can aid in the prevention of FASD and contains instances from both Canada and other countries.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. An increasing number of societies recognize the connection between alcohol consumption during pregnancy and the reinforcement and rebuilding of strong family ties. It is widely acknowledged that the ability of many women to reduce or abstain from alcohol during pregnancy is influenced by the involvement of partners and family members. Community-based initiatives are seen as a way to shift the responsibility for caring for women with FASD from individual women to support networks that acknowledge the numerous factors impacting women's health and well-being.

Numerous Indigenous groups have expanded their interventions to encompass women's partners, families, and communities, even though women typically receive the primary focus in most FASD preventive endeavors. Parenthood provides an opportunity for both women and men to reconnect with cultural traditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting, fostering positive adjustments. Partners are actively involved in community education and awareness campaigns addressing alcohol, other substances, and FASD. They have also received brief support for addressing health and well-being, including substance use, as part of prenatal care.

> "Elders have assumed leadership roles in addressing alcohol and FASD concerns within their communities.."

A Critical Priority.

Healthcare training on best practices for discussing alcohol use during pregnancy.

Detecting Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) early allows us to comprehend an individual's strengths and weaknesses, facilitating their access to suitable intervention and support services.

Consequently, early diagnosis can help prevent the development of challenges associated with this neurodevelopmental condition and promote improved well-being.

Parents, caregivers, and those assisting individuals undergoing FASD assessments should be empowered to actively participate in the diagnostic process and the resulting care planning activities.

Involving families allows clinicians to gather more comprehensive information, enhancing the assessment process and preparing them for their role in supporting their loved ones post-diagnosis.

Families and caregivers also play an active and invaluable role in assisting individuals, including children, youth, and adults, throughout the various stages of the diagnostic process.

The FASD diagnosis process should provide meaningful opportunities to engage with birth mothers who may be facing issues related to alcohol or substance use, in a respectful and sensitive manner. It's crucial to incorporate training on best practices for discussing alcohol use during pregnancy as a mandatory part of healthcare education.

The diagnostic assessment should involve discussing an individual's strengths and challenges, aiming to facilitate interventions and support that yield tangible outcomes in collaboration with individuals, families, communities, and systems. The recommendations following the diagnostic assessment should address the individual's immediate basic needs and help them access the necessary support and services.

Early and effective identification through screening and diagnostic assessment, leading to appropriate interventions, are important to improving outcomes for this complex population.

> "Continual support for those with FASD and their families at all life stages is vital for lasting success."

Supportig Adults with FASD in the Justice System.

A significant number of individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) face legal system entanglement without proper diagnosis and support, leading to recurring struggles. Recognizing this issue, the Manitoba FASD Centre and FASD Justice Team received the Claudette Bradshaw FASD Innovation Award for their program aiding adults with FASD in the justice system. The three-year Adult FASD Justice Pilot Program, initiated in 2020, targets young adults (18-25) in Manitoba's legal system, providing FASD testing, diagnostic services, specialized therapies, and access to the FASD Docket for sentencing-related issues. It surpassed goals by diagnosing 88% of participants with FASD, expanding access to community services and support. This initiative transforms individuals and their support systems, enhancing their ability to navigate life's challenges. Early findings emphasize the significance of structured protocols, robust support networks, improved case management, and comprehensive training, offering hope for better outcomes in the legal system for those with FASD.

NEAFAN
Northeast Alberta FASD Network

Connect

Website: www.neafan.ca

Facebook: @neafanfasd

Instagram: @neafanfm

Twitter: @neafanfm

Links & Resources

- Contact NEAFAN

Harnessing the Power of Community.

Family members, friends, and acquaintances form tight-knit communities that often see themselves as an untapped resource in assisting people who use substances. They consider themselves as having lived experience due to their emotional investment in their loved ones' lives. Regardless of how they define themselves, their insights are valuable. Partnering with individuals, groups, and organizations possessing this knowledge and expertise enhances our collaborative efforts.

Collaborating with individuals with lived and living experience of substance use, as well as their families and friends, is crucial for many good reasons. These groups are the primary stakeholders in any work related to their well-being and must be integral partners. They are best equipped to identify effective approaches for their communities, improving research relevance and intervention applicability. Research shows the benefits of increased involvement from these groups. They have demonstrated expertise while advocating for change and inclusion in service design. Ethically and from a human rights standpoint, people should have a say in decisions affecting their lives. Building capacity, empowerment, trust, and deepening relationships are valuable outcomes for all parties involved.

Moreover, these communities offer a wealth of collective wisdom, shaped by the firsthand challenges and triumphs they've encountered. This wisdom informs strategies that are practical and effective in supporting those affected by substance use. Inclusion and collaboration with these groups not only enrich our understanding but also empower individuals and communities to take charge of their well-being, ensuring more comprehensive, empathetic, and ultimately successful outcomes in the realm of substance use interventions. It is a partnership that values the voices of all stakeholders, respecting their rights and promoting holistic solutions that serve everyone involved.

Families, friends and communities play a pivotal role.