NEAFAN

Northeast Alberta FASD Network

Captain's Place

FASD Supportive Housing for Men.

International Men's Day 2025.

International Men’s Day, observed every year on November 19, invites us to pause and recognize the many ways men contribute to the health and stability of their families and communities. It is a day that highlights positive masculinity, emotional well-being, support, and connection—qualities that often go unnamed but make a meaningful difference in everyday life. When understood through the lens of FASD prevention, this day becomes an opportunity to acknowledge the quiet influence men have in helping create safe, supportive, alcohol-free environments around pregnancy.

FASD prevention has long been portrayed as an issue for pregnant people to manage alone, yet every aspect of prevention is strengthened when partners and families are involved. Men play an essential role in shaping the conditions that reduce risk, whether through the example they set, the support they offer, or the way they participate in conversations about alcohol and health. International Men’s Day provides a space to recognize that prevention is not about blame or pressure but about shared responsibility and the everyday choices that help families feel supported and cared for.

Many men today are navigating stresses related to work, finances, family responsibilities, and mental health, often without the encouragement to seek help or talk openly about what they are facing.

> *" When partners feel emotionally safe and supported, avoiding alcohol in pregnancy becomes more manageable and far less isolating."*

International Men’s Day also focuses on these realities, reminding us that when men look after their own health—physical, mental, and emotional—it strengthens the people around them. Healthier relationships grow from this foundation, and when partners feel emotionally safe and supported, avoiding alcohol in pregnancy becomes more manageable and far less isolating.

The research is clear that pregnant people are more successful in avoiding alcohol when their partners are involved, whether by reducing or avoiding alcohol themselves, helping to create alcohol-free spaces, or providing steady, non-judgmental encouragement.

These are simple acts that often go unnoticed but carry a profound impact. International Men’s Day gives us an opportunity to highlight these strengths and to reframe prevention as something men already participate in through their support, presence, and care. Ultimately, International Men’s Day reminds us that healthier families start with healthier connections.

By acknowledging the positive roles men play and encouraging open conversations about wellness, stress, and alcohol use, we strengthen the foundation for FASD prevention in our communities. When men are supported, encouraged, and included, everyone benefits—especially the families preparing to welcome a new life.

CAPTAIN'S PLACE

Supportive Housing for Men

Captain’s Place in Fort McMurray offers a stable, supportive home for adult men who are homeless or at risk and living with, or suspected of having, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Designed as a small, relationship-based program, the home provides space for three residents and is anchored by a live-in male mentor who offers consistent guidance, modelling, and encouragement throughout daily life.

For many individuals with FASD, challenges with memory, planning, and routine can make independent living extremely difficult. Captain’s Place helps bridge that gap by providing structure and calm predictability. Residents receive support with essential tasks such as organizing appointments, managing medication, preparing meals, and learning practical life-skills. The program also assists with securing identification, accessing healthcare, and connecting with community services, building a foundation that many have never had the chance to experience.

What makes Captain’s Place especially effective is its focus on relationship and stability. The mentor’s daily presence creates trust and helps residents navigate moments that might otherwise lead to crisis or homelessness. In this environment, men can develop confidence, strengthen everyday skills, and begin to envision longer-term goals.

Although small in scale, Captain’s Place demonstrates how tailored housing supports can change trajectories. With the right structure and compassionate guidance, individuals with FASD can build safer, more stable lives and engage more fully in their community.

NICE Sets a Clear Path Forward for FASD Prevention and Support.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) remains one of the most preventable yet persistently misunderstood neurodevelopment disabilities. The United Kingdom's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has taken a bold step toward changing that narrative through its Quality Standard on FASD—a framework designed to transform how pregnancy care, assessment, and lifelong support are delivered. At its heart, the standard recognizes that prevention begins with conversation and that compassion and consistency—not judgment—create the conditions for change.

The guideline begins with the simplest, most vital truth: there is no known safe level of alcohol during pregnancy. Yet translating that knowledge into practice depends on how it is communicated. NICE calls for every pregnant woman to receive clear and empathetic guidance at each point of care, ensuring that discussions about alcohol are woven naturally into routine antenatal visits. When conversations are respectful and supportive, women are more likely to disclose honestly, seek help, and trust their providers.

Just as important is the act of listening and documenting. Regularly asking about alcohol use and recording it in medical notes does more than fill a form—it opens the door to early identification and intervention. When that information follows a child through the healthcare system, it can later guide assessment, helping professionals connect developmental or behavioural concerns to possible prenatal alcohol exposure.

The standard also speaks directly to a widespread gap in practice: too many children who struggle developmentally are never evaluated for FASD simply because they lack the classic facial characteristics. NICE urges professionals to look deeper and refer any child with significant physical, learning, or behavioural challenges—and known or probable alcohol exposure—for assessment by a trained, multidisciplinary team.

Ultimately, the goal is not only diagnosis but meaningful, coordinated support. Once FASD is identified, a management plan should bring together health, education, and social services, anticipating future transitions and adjusting as needs evolve. What emerges from this framework is a call for systems to meet families with understanding, to respond with structure rather than stigma, and to ensure that no child or caregiver is left navigating FASD alone.

" Listening, Documenting, and Acting: A Modern Approach to FASD. "

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Nov. 25

November 25 marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of 16 Days of Activism leading to Human Rights Day. The Istanbul Convention, adopted in 2011, sets legally binding standards to prevent violence, protect and support victims, and prosecute perpetrators through coordinated, comprehensive policies across member states.

A Brief Conversation Can Prevent FASD.

Unhealthy alcohol use remains one of the most common, preventable causes of early death in North America. From liver disease to accidents and birth defects, the effects of alcohol ripple far beyond the individual, touching families, communities, and healthcare systems. Recognizing how widespread the problem is, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) released its updated recommendation urging primary-care providers to screen every adult—including pregnant women—for risky drinking and to follow that screening with brief, supportive counselling.

What makes this recommendation so important is not its novelty but its insistence on action within ordinary healthcare visits. Alcohol use is often hidden behind social norms that celebrate drinking while ignoring its harm. A simple one- or two-question screen, such as asking how many times a person has had several drinks in one day over the past year, can reveal patterns that put health at risk long before dependence develops.

The task force found that when adults who screened positive received even a few minutes of conversation, practical advice, or motivational feedback, their alcohol consumption dropped significantly in the months that followed.

For pregnant women, the impact was even clearer. Brief, compassionate counselling doubled the likelihood that women would remain alcohol-free throughout pregnancy—an outcome directly linked to preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

The evidence supporting these short interventions is strong, while the risks are virtually none. Patients who are asked and supported, rather than judged, are more likely to change.

The report also highlights what is missing. Despite strong adult data, there is still not enough evidence to determine whether screening works as well for adolescents, and too few studies follow long-term health outcomes. Yet the message is clear: prevention begins with dialogue. Integrating alcohol screening into every primary-care and prenatal visit normalizes the conversation and helps remove stigma.

By making brief counselling a routine part of care, clinicians can transform what might seem like a minor question into a lifesaving one. The recommendation reminds us that the simple act of asking—and listening—can change the course of lives before harm takes root.

Rethinking Adult FASD Housing.

Across Canada, many adults with FASD are striving for something deceptively simple — a life that feels like their own. This recent study, led by Gault and colleagues, invites adults with FASD to describe their current living situations and to imagine what ideal support and independence could look like. Their responses reveal a striking gap between what exists and what is needed.
Most participants live in family homes or semi-supported settings where help is available but autonomy can feel limited. Others navigate independent apartments with little day-to-day guidance, often encountering loneliness, disorganization, and stress around finances or employment.

Despite these challenges, participants expressed clear ideas about what allows them to thrive: stable housing, predictable routines, trusted relationships, and workers who genuinely understand FASD rather than merely “manage” it.

The study’s greatest strength lies in the voices of the adults themselves. They emphasized that support should be with them, not for them — rooted in respect, flexibility, and genuine choice. Many said they wanted opportunities to contribute to household decisions, stay connected with their communities, and have their strengths recognized. They spoke of small but powerful changes that could enhance independence: written reminders instead of verbal ones, consistent staff who build rapport, and access to programs that teach daily-living skills in realistic ways.

Researchers highlight that these insights point to a new framework for FASD-informed housing — one that integrates trauma-aware, culturally responsive, and person-centred care. Creating environments where adults can experience both safety and self-direction means more than adding services; it requires reimagining how “support” is defined. The study closes with a reminder that stability, belonging, and dignity are not luxuries but essential conditions for long-term wellbeing.

By documenting lived experience in detail, this research helps policymakers, clinicians, and community agencies design supports that mirror what adults with FASD actually value. It also invites a shift in public perception — from seeing adults with FASD as dependent to recognizing them as experts in their own lives.

Invite adults with FASD to describe their current living situations and to imagine what ideal support and independence could look like.

Let's Talk

The Prevention Conversation

It's time to talk about alcohol and pregnancy

Amy Tobin B.Ed
FASD Prevention Conversation Facilitator
amy.tobin@mcman.ca
780-750-9729

Amy Tobin, B. Ed, is the FASD Prevention Conversation Facilitator with NEAFAN (Northeast Alberta FASD Network) and an adoptive mother of two. Prior to motherhood, she was an elementary school teacher with the Fort McMurray Public School District for six years. Her passion for FASD, and its prevention, began nine years ago when she became a mother via adoption and was introduced, personally, to the beauty and perplexity of parenting those with prenatal alcohol exposure. Since then, she has dedicated much of her time to learning about, and educating others, on the effects of alcohol during pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Her approach is one that takes into consideration the complexities that adoption, generational, and cultural trauma can play within FASD.

PREVENTION CONVERSATION

The Prevention Conversation program aims to raise awareness of FASD and FASD Prevention among target populations including Healthcare and Social Service Providers, Women of Childbearing Age, Partners, Families, Friends and Caregivers. The Project is geared towards highlighting the importance of screening all women in child bearing age for alcohol use and the risks associated with FASD, improving supports for these women and promoting involvement of community members and primary care providers.

The Prevention Conversation is aimed at encouraging a community wide awareness of FASD and prevention, developing the skills within the community to engage in non-judgmental, empathetic conversations about alcohol use during pregnancy. The Prevention Conversation is centered around increasing knowledge of FASD through training service providers on the use of screening tools to engage women in the Prevention Conversation.

To book a **Prevention Conversation** presentation, please contact:

Amy Tobin
FASD Prevention Conversation Facilitator

McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Assoc.
Fort McMurray, AB

amy.tobin@mcman.ca
780-750-9729

NEAFAN.CA

NEAFAN
Northeast Alberta FASD Network