



**HAVE YOU CONSIDERED. . . .
. . . .THE PERSON YOU ARE SERVING MAY HAVE FASD?**



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) - is the umbrella term used to describe the full range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother consumed alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical problems and/or problems with behavior and learning.¹

"I had no idea!" is what is often heard from social service professionals who receive training on FASD. Learning about FASD can help social workers and caregivers understand the array of disorders caused by alcohol damage and how it may affect the children and families they serve and care for.

-Teresa Kellerman, 2004, www.nofasct.org

Impact on Child Welfare: Some key facts social service professionals need to know.

- * A large majority of those who have FASD have none of the recognizable facial features that the more commonly known disorder of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) presents.
- * Studies indicate that children in foster care are more likely to have FASD, however they are often undiagnosed, which results in ineffective case management and treatment plans.
- * Children affected by FASD often experience problems with bonding, inappropriate social interactions, school disruptions, oppositional behavior, and mental illness.
- * Youth diagnosed with FASD typically have difficulty transitioning into adulthood and may never be able to live independently.
- * A high percentage of mothers who have babies with FASD have a history of abuse (physical and sexual) and at least half of them are alcohol affected themselves.
- * Parents with FASD often go undiagnosed and may not function effectively in a parent role.

What are common symptoms of FASD?

- FASD is a leading known cause of mental retardation, and birth defects with brain damage caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol being the most harmful effect
- Other symptoms may include social and emotional problems and learning disabilities
 - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder – disorganization, impulsivity, distractibility, hyperactivity
 - Neuromotor Impairment – balance, coordination, over/under-sensitivity to stimuli
 - Executive Functioning – the ability to judge, plan, empathize, estimate, delay gratification
 - Speech Problems – sometimes generally delayed, often a much better talker than listener

How many people are affected by FASD?

- It is estimated that approximately 1 out of every 100 people in the United State may have FASD². Recent evidence suggests that rate could be as high as 5%³
 - Using the more conservative national FASD prevalence estimates and California birth data, it is estimated that about 5550 babies are born with FASD in California every year.* Using California's population census numbers from 2008, over 380,000 citizens may be struggling in life because of prenatal exposure to alcohol⁴.
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*This estimate was calculated using nationwide prevalence rates of FASD. Not adjusted for demographical differences between the state and the nation.

- In 2007, 15.0% of women reported drinking during the first or third trimester of their pregnancy⁵
- In 2008, almost 45% of women age 18-44 reported having had at least one alcoholic drink in the past month and 13% reported drinking 4 or more drinks on one occasion or binge drinking.⁶ Since 50% of all pregnancies are unplanned,⁷ women of reproductive age who drink even occasionally could be exposing a pregnancy to alcohol.
- Even among women who were trying to get pregnant at the time surveyed, 50% reported drinking in the past month.⁸

How can FASD be prevented?

- The US Surgeon General has urged pregnant women and women who may become pregnant to abstain from alcohol consumption in order to eliminate the chance of giving birth to a baby with any of the harmful effects of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).⁹
- An unborn baby's brain is very sensitive to damage throughout a pregnancy. Most fetal alcohol exposure occurs in the first weeks when there is the greatest risk of causing physical and developmental effects defects¹⁰.
- **FASD IS 100% PREVENTABLE IF A WOMAN DOESN'T DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE SHE IS PREGNANT¹¹.**

LINKS

- ❖ Center for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html>
- ❖ American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologist - http://www.acog.org/acog_districts/dist_notice.cfm?recno=1&bulletin=2929
- ❖ SAMHSA Center for Excellence – The FASD Center <http://fasdcenter.samhsa.gov/>
- ❖ National Association on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome <http://www.nofas.org/>
- ❖ ADP Women's Page <http://www.adp.ca.gov/women/FASD.shtml>
- ❖ FASD Publications from SAMHSA: <http://ncadistore.samhsa.gov/catalog/results.aspx?topic=230&h=drugs>

¹ Center for Disease Control <http://cdc.gov/features/fasd>

² May PA and Gossage JP. Estimating the Prevalence of FAS: A Summary. NIAA, National Institute of Health

³ Phillip A. May, J Phillip Gossage, Wendy O. Kalberg, Luther K. Robinson, David Buckley, Melanie Manning, and H. Eugene Hoyme; Prevalence and Epidemiologic Characteristics of FASD from Various Research Methods with an Emphasis on Recent In-School Studies; *Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews* 15: 176-192 (2009)

⁴ May, PA and Gossage, JP. Estimating the Prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: *A Summary. Alcohol Research & Health*, 25 (Fall 2001): 159-167

⁵ California Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program, Maternal Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) Survey, 2007

Accessible at: [http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/surveys/Pages/MaternalandInfantHealthAssessment\(MIHA\)survey.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/surveys/Pages/MaternalandInfantHealthAssessment(MIHA)survey.aspx)

⁶ California Department of Public Health, California Women's Health Survey, 2008

⁷ National Survey of Family Growth, 2002

⁸ California Women's Health Survey 2006-2007

⁹ Office of the Surgeon General News Release <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/pressreleases/sg02222005.html>

¹⁰ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report, Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Substance Use Among Pregnant Women During 1999 and 2000*, 17May02

¹¹ Center for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html>