



# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

## FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER – WHAT IS IT?

Alcohol is a teratogen and a neurotoxin, that is an agent that is known to adversely affect fetal development and cause birth defects and brain damage. Alcohol crosses the placenta freely and produces equivalent concentrations in fetal circulation to that of the mother.

FASD is a life-long disability; it is not curable, however early diagnosis and appropriate interventions can make an enormous difference to the life of the person with the disability. Children who have been exposed to alcohol during pregnancy may have trouble:

- adding, subtracting and handling money
- thinking things through / reasoning
- learning from experience
- understanding the consequences of their actions
- memory, and
- getting along with others

Because of their disabilities, people who are affected by FASD may have special needs that require life-long help even when they are adults:

- handling money, such as paying rent or bills and buying food
- learning from their experiences and making changes in behaviour
- understanding the consequences of their actions and working on issues independently
- parenting
- relationships and interacting with other people socially, and
- keeping a job

FASD can sometimes be confused with developmental delays and behaviour disorders. In Australia, very few doctors have been trained to diagnose the disabilities that fall under the fetal alcohol spectrum.

## DO YOU HAVE CLIENTS WHO ...

- Say all the right things but then can't seem to follow through?
- Have been in trouble with the law for the same thing/s over and over?
- Have a history of substance abuse?
- Left school early?
- Has a patchy employment history?
- Has a mental illness?
- May have attempted suicide?
- Has cycled through many other services?
- Does well while you are supporting them but when the support is withdrawn, things fall apart quite quickly?



For support and information on FASD contact:

[www.rffada.org](http://www.rffada.org)  
1800rffada