



Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association

## Terminology for use by professionals when discussing FASD and birth parents

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The rffada has been asked to prepare a document which outlines the most appropriate language to use when discussing alcohol and pregnancy and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

When discussing pregnant women and alcohol consumption the most appropriate language is that which takes the blame from pregnant women and places it on alcohol.

For example language which states, “when a pregnant woman consumes alcohol”, places a measure of blame on the pregnant woman. If we use language which focuses the listener and reader on the alcohol, “when alcohol is consumed while pregnant” we will have more acceptance of the fact that mothers and fathers are not to be blamed or shamed should they deliver a child or children with FASD.

If we take steps to reduce the blame now, more birth mothers will feel confident in speaking up about the condition. Hundreds of books, tens of thousands of research and scholarly articles and untold public health reports have been generated in the last thirty years. Yet one voice has been mostly silent, the voice of the birth mothers themselves<sup>1</sup>.

The rffada recommends this way of speaking about alcohol and pregnancy to all who have cause to discuss this condition and its implications.

### Authorisation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ARH", is written over a horizontal line.

Anne Russell  
Secretary rffada  
02<sup>nd</sup> July 2012

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<sup>1</sup> Sterling Clarren Keynote Address Northern Prairie Conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome 2002 Whitehorse