

What is FASD?

A Factsheet for Service Providers (No.1)

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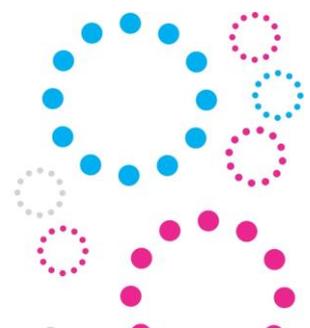
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability. Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and may need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.

FASD is a condition that is an outcome of parents either not being aware of the dangers of alcohol use when pregnant or planning a pregnancy, or not being supported to stay healthy and strong during pregnancy. Alcohol can cause damage to the unborn child at any time during pregnancy, even before a pregnancy has been confirmed. The level of harm is dependent on a wide range of factors, making it impossible to predict the outcome of alcohol exposure to any individual pregnancy. Factors include the amount and frequency of alcohol use, parent age, health of the mother (including nutrition, tobacco and other drugs and mental health) and environmental factors such as stress.

FASD diagnosis

FASD is often referred to as the 'invisible disability' as it often goes undetected, whether it be overlooked, ignored, attributed to another cause or even simply blamed on 'poor' parenting or the environment the child is living in. Assessment and diagnosis of FASD is important as it may provide answers for families and improve access to services that can improve life outcomes.

When children or adults have no visible signs of alcohol exposure their behaviours or challenges may be wrongly labelled as poor parenting or misdiagnosed as other disorders (for example Oppositional Defiant Disorder, ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder). FASD is a complex disability and interventions that work are often specific to the disability. The quality and type of interventions truly matters. International studies tell us that early diagnosis and interventions for FASD are linked with better long-term outcomes for the child and the family who support them.



Using a 'FASD lens' approach

Positive outcomes can be achieved when individuals with FASD are appropriately supported using a 'FASD lens' approach. Using a FASD lens approach with your client involves seeking to understand how an individual is impacted by FASD, their areas of need and their areas of strength. Using a FASD lens is necessary to provide adequate support in case planning and case management, such as that involved in the NDIS process.

Where I can find out more information about FASD?

NOFASD Australia is the National Peak Body for parents, carers and individuals impacted by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Founded in 1999 and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, we provide the essential bridge linking those with lived experience with researchers and clinicians.

NOFASD Australia provide a helpline for people impacted by FASD and those wanting information on how to support individuals with FASD. We also maintain an up-to-date comprehensive website with curated resources and links.

If you would like additional information about FASD or to read more about FASD and the NDIS, please visit the [NOFASD Australia website](https://www.nofasd.org.au).

