

Northwest FASD Network, providing a collaborative and strength-based approach to FASD.



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This *Northwest Knot* is the second newsletter created on behalf of the Northwest Alberta Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Service Network. You can find Issue 1 on the Network website at www.nwfasdnetwork.ca.

With the circulation of this newsletter we hope to raise awareness about FASD and provide information about FASD Assessment and Diagnostic processes and FASD Support Services that are available in our communities.

What Is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

FASD is a term used to describe a range of disabilities that may affect individuals whose mothers consumed alcohol when

they were pregnant. The umbrella term FASD covers several alcohol related medical diagnoses, which include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS), alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND) and alcohol-related birth defects (ARNB).

These diagnoses may be provided after an individual receives numerous professional assessments by a FASD diagnostic team. An assessment and diagnoses process does not always lead to a confirmed diagnosis.

The Northwest Network has 3 fully operational diagnostic teams located in Grande Prairie, Grimshaw and High Prairie. (see the page 5 for contact information).

The FASD Diagnostic Process

What is involved in the FASD Assessment & Diagnoses Process?

The FASD assessment and diagnostic involves a multidisciplinary team providing detailed assessments that are unique to the individual.

Stages of Assessment:

- 1) **Pre-clinic**—the diagnostic coordinator will complete the intake form and collect needed information for the team.
- 2) **Assessments**—the team meets with the individual and conducts their professional assessments.
- 3) **Team Meeting**— the team will meet to discuss the assessment results, make a determination of diagnosis and provide recommendations for follow-up services and interventions.
- 4) **Family/ Client meeting**—the diagnostic coordinator will meet with the parent/ caregiver/individual to discuss the results and recommendations. The diagnostic coordinator will help the family access available supports.

Who is on the FASD Diagnostic Team?

The Diagnostic Teams can include the following health professionals:

- Diagnostic Coordinator
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Psychologist
- Family Physician or Pediatrician
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Public Health Nurse

The team may invite others such as:

- Mental Health Therapist
- Social Worker and/or Aboriginal Liaison (if involved with the individual/ child before the diagnoses process)
- FASD Family Support Worker
- Education representative

What is the Role of Each Team Member? Diagnostic Coordinator

Gathers required information, provides it to the team, organizes the team members training, roles/

responsibilities, organizes the diagnostic clinic days, prepares the diagnostic report and meets with the individual/family to review the report and recommendations.



Speech Language Pathologist

The speech-language pathologist tests understanding of language, use of language, verbal reasoning and use of speech sounds.

Psychologist

A psychologist tests memory, visual problem-solving, academic abilities and intelligence.

Family Physician or Pediatrician

As part of the complete assessment a medical doctor will complete a medical assessment.

Occupational Therapist

An occupational therapy assessment looks at a patient's physical, mental and psychological abilities.

Physical Therapist

A physical therapist evaluates components of movement including: strength, range of motion, flexibility, balance, posture, body mechanics, coordination, endurance, general mobility.

Public Health Nurse

Provides information to the diagnostic coordinator such as birth records and growth records.

The FASD Diagnostic Process

What is the result of the FASD Assessment & Diagnostic Process?

"A diagnostic report will be written by the diagnostic coordinator. This report will identify the basis for the diagnosis or exclusion of an FASD.

The report will provide important information about the individuals unique needs and will allow interventions to be tailored to the individuals strengths and weaknesses.

How is the Assessment & Diagnosis Process of Benefit?

Seeking a diagnosis can be a complex and time consuming process. Many individuals and families have mixed feelings about whether a diagnosis will be beneficial to them.

Here is a list of some of the benefits of the Diagnosis and Assessment Process:

Many of the difficulties presented with FASD have a good chance of being improved with appropriate interventions . The recommendations in the diagnostic report can be carried out by support workers, parents and/

or educators.

The process can open opportunities for assistance and support for care givers (e.g. government-based resources and services).

The earlier the diagnosis and interventions are put into place, the greater the likelihood for the reduction of associated symptoms (school disruptions, mental health problems, etc).

It provides reasons for caregivers and those affected to become more knowledgeable about the disability and the ways to help.

It may explain the child's behavior, which can reducing caregiver frustration.

It can reveal important conditions that need to be treated, such as cardiac problems, seizures, etc.

It can help the individual or caregiver understand their own/ their child's/youth's strengths and weaknesses in the following areas:

- Educational / Work achievement
- Executive functioning (planning, abstract thinking).
- Memory
- Information processing

- Language skills
- Social skills and adaptive behaviors.
- Maladaptive behaviors
- Attention and or activity level.
- Neurological soft signs (gross motor, fine motor, sensory abnormalities).

It can act as a tool for legal professionals to use in court and custody issues.

When an individual can access supports early, secondary disabilities may be preventable or the severity of the disabilities reduced.

Secondary disabilities include mental health problems, disrupted school experience, trouble with the law, confinement, inappropriate sexual behavior, alcohol and drug problems, and problems with employment and dependent living). "



Ref-

A Caregivers Response to the Assessment & Diagnosis Process

Question: "How did you feel about the FASD Assessment & Diagnostic process?"

Source: www.asantecentre.org

Response: "I feel this assessment was the best thing we ever did for (our child), and for us too. We learned a lot about her and ways to handle different situations that come up daily. It was needed years ago."

A few weeks after the assessment was completed and the community strategies had been implemented, the parent added: "This assessment has made a great difference at the school level. The teachers now listen to us."

Northwest Network FASD Support Services

In the Northwest Network agencies offer all of the following support services:

- Support for Individuals with FASD
- Support for Caregivers of Individuals with FASD/ suspected FASD
- Referrals & Education
- Resource Library
- Employment Programming



Here are some examples of the types of services offered in each services area:

Goodwill Industries of Alberta FASD Employment Programming

The goal of the program is to provide individuals with or suspected of having an FASD with the opportunity to enhance their employability skills.

The with the ultimate goal is for the individual to obtain and maintain paid employment.

The individual upon entrance to the program will have an employability assessment. This will identify the individuals strengths, abilities, needs, preferences, desired outcomes and areas for skill development.

The results of the assessment will be used to complete a Personalized Action Plan with goals for the individual to work on.

The Employment Counsellor will work on the goals with the individual at the Goodwill office location.

Examples of goals include learning how to:

- create a resume
- search for jobs
- develop and keep a good relationship with their employer
- manage anger

The Job Coach is available to assist individuals in getting to and from work as well as help to remove barriers and work through issues on the job.

Examples of the Job Coach's services include:

- Arranging transportation for clients
- Attending meetings with the client and their employer to resolve issues and to educate the employer on the individuals strengths and areas of difficulty.
- Assist the client on the job to develop appropriate behaviours such as interactions with other individuals, attendance, appearance/ hygiene, etc.

Accredited Supportive Living Services (ASLS)

ASLS hires FASD support workers to provide direct supports to families/ caregivers with a child and to Adults with suspected or confirmed diagnosis of FASD.

The type supports offered include:

- Coordination with Education - the support worker can work with teachers, classroom aides, and children while they are in school with year-end

transitions and classroom adjustments.

- Assist families and individuals in accessing funding and resources such as AISH, PUF, Child Disability Tax Credit, summer camps, employment and mental health services.
- Provides education to families on the most recent resources, intervention strategies and behaviour management techniques.
- Provide a parent/ caregiver support group

Northern Association for FASD (NAFASD)

The components of support services provided is considered a community based circle of support for the individuals and their families living with FASD.

Examples of supports offered by NAFASD include:

- Put on a parenting class in partnership with a community agency.
- Provide a lending library
- Providing education to the teachers/ principal about strategies that will assist in developing positive behaviours.
- Assist adults in completing paperwork such as an AISH application, housing application, updating a resume and employment assistance application.
- Making referrals to local agencies such as mental health, assisted housing and medical appointments.
- Attending appointments with the clients to assist the individual in understanding the information provided.

Northwest Network FASD Support Services



Every person with FASD is unique and will have different strengths and limitations. This means that supports provided might look different for each person.

Two important things for you to know

The Support Services are for children, youth and adults in Alberta.

A diagnosis is not needed to be eligible for support services.

FASD Support or Diagnostic & Assessment Services

The Northern Association for FASD—FASD Circle of Community Supports & Diagnosis
This association offers services to the communities of High Prairie, Fox Creek and Valleyview areas. Contact Charlene McLay, Program Coordinator at (780) 523-3699; nafasd@telus.net

Accredited Supportive Living Services (ASLS) FASD Diagnostic and Support Services
The ASLS Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Program offers FASD services in and around Peace River, Grimshaw, Manning, Fairview, Nampa and Grande Prairie areas. Contact Julie Langlois, Program Coordinator at 1-877-332-4183

Note: Both agencies provide services to adults, youth and children but supports for all age groups are not available in all areas.

FASD Support Services

Goodwill Industries of Alberta— FASD REACH Employment Program
Goodwill offers FASD specific Employment Programming to Adults with or suspected of having FASD in Grande Prairie. Contact information: Brittney Trudeau (780) 402-6348, Program Manager

NETWORK PARTNERSHIP: WJS - Generations FASD Program

The Generations FASD Program offers supports to Adults in the communities of Peace River, Grimshaw, Fairview, Manning and Nampa area. Contact information: Kathy Archer, Program Manager, (780)624-8550

The Network's service area includes the three major service areas of Peace River, High Prairie, and Grande Prairie.

The Network boundaries reach north to Manning, east to Kinuso, south to Fox Creek and Grande Cache, and west to the border of British Columbia.

Questions?
Contact: Renee Little,
FASD Network
Coordinator

info@nwfasdnetwork.ca
780-357-75808

Or visit our website at
www.nwfasdnetwork.ca

