

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

## WHAT IS FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is now used as a diagnostic term, when prenatal alcohol exposure is considered to be a significant contributor to physical and neurobehavioural effects in children, youth and adults.

## CANADIAN DIAGNOSTIC STANDARDS

In 2015, *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: a guideline for diagnosis across the lifespan*<sup>1</sup> was published, replacing the original Canadian guidelines for diagnosis (2005). This new guideline was developed as a result of emergent evidence, current practice and clinical experience in this field.

## BENEFITS OF DIAGNOSIS

An accurate diagnosis can help to understand the challenges of individuals impacted by FASD:

- ✓ Guide appropriate post-diagnosis interventions and strategies for support
- ✓ Reduce the number of secondary disabilities or mitigate adverse experiences often seen in individuals impacted by FASD (i.e. mental health problems, trouble with the law, homelessness, addictions issues, etc.)<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Link birth parents with supports and interventions to prevent further affected births
- ✓ Provide information regarding incidence and prevalence rates of FASD in Canada
- ✓ Support applications for disability tax credits, financial supports and other services for the individual and/or their caregivers
- ✓ Provide important information regarding supports for youth transitioning to adulthood, such as guardianship, trusteeship and legal representation agreements

## DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURE

FASD is a medical diagnosis. The guideline recommends a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach be used to obtain an accurate diagnosis and a comprehensive assessment of the individual's functional abilities.

## CORE CLINIC TEAM MEMBERS

Team membership varies and is dependent on the age of the individual being assessed. A pediatric team should include:

### PHYSICIAN

- background training specific to FASD diagnosis

### PSYCHOLOGIST

- education, expertise and scope of practice relevant to clinical testing

### SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

### CLINIC COORDINATOR

Adult and pediatric teams may include additional stakeholders representing health, social services, justice, education, mental health and cultural representation.

## RECOMMENDED SCREENING TOOLS

A reliable, accurate maternal alcohol history is the best screening tool. The Life History Screen<sup>4</sup>, the FASD Screen and Referral Form for Youth Probation Officers<sup>5</sup> and the The Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres National FASD Screening Toolkit<sup>6</sup> can also validate a referral for FASD diagnosis. All positive screens should prompt a referral for further assessments, keeping in mind that screening is not a diagnosis.

<sup>1</sup> Cook, JL, et al, Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: a guideline for diagnosis across the lifespan. CMAJ, December 2015. [www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2015/12/14/cmaj.141593](http://www.cmaj.ca/content/early/2015/12/14/cmaj.141593)

<sup>2</sup> Streissguth A & Kanter J (1997), *The Challenge of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Overcoming Secondary Disabilities*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, JL, et al. (2015)

<sup>4</sup> Grant, TM et al, Screening in treatment for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders that could affect therapeutic progress. *International Journal of Alcohol and Drug Research*, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Conry, J & Asante, KO, *Youth probation officers' guide to FASD screening and referral*, 2010, The Asante Centre for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Maple Ridge, BC

<sup>6</sup> [www.caphc.org/fasd/fasd-national-screening-tool-kit](http://www.caphc.org/fasd/fasd-national-screening-tool-kit)

# British Columbia Assessment & Diagnostic Clinic Contact Information

## Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Team Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children

3644 Slocan St. Vancouver, BC V5M 3E8

[P] 604.453.8300 ext. 8208

<http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/our-services/complex-developmental-behavioural-conditions>

## Complex Developmental and Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Clinic Nanaimo Child Development Centre

1135 Nelson St. Nanaimo, BC V9S 2K4

[P] 250.753.0251

<http://www.nanaimocdc.com/programs-services/vican/>

## Beacon Community Services FASD Circle Adult Diagnostic Clinic

2723 Quadra St. Victoria, BC V8T 4E5

[P] 250.595.6626

<https://beaconcs.ca>

## Diagnostic and Assessment Services Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Society for British Columbia

O/A The Asante Centre and Minga Marketplace

Unit 103, 22356 McIntosh Ave. Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3C1

[P] 604.467.7101

[www.asantecentre.org](http://www.asantecentre.org)

## Northern Health Assessment Network [NHAN] Provincial Health Services Authority

1st Floor, 1444 Edmonton St. Prince George, BC V2M 6W5

[P] 250.565.5827

[northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/PublicHealth/NorthernHealthAssessmentNetwork/ComplexDevelopmentalBehaviouralConditions.aspx](http://northernhealth.ca/YourHealth/PublicHealth/NorthernHealthAssessmentNetwork/ComplexDevelopmentalBehaviouralConditions.aspx)

## Interior Health Children's Assessment Network [IHCAN]

#309-1664 Richter St. Kelowna, BC V1Y 8N3

[P] 250.712.0416

[www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

## Fraser Developmental Clinic Harper and Associates, Psychology

261-610 6th St. New Westminster, BC V3L 3C2

[P] 604.522.7979

## Complex Developmental and Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Clinic Queen Alexander Centre for Children's Health

Vancouver Island Health Authority

2400 Arbutus Rd. Victoria, BC V8N 1V7

[P] 250.519.5390 ext. 36340

[http://www.viha.ca/cyf\\_rehab/assessment/vican/](http://www.viha.ca/cyf_rehab/assessment/vican/)