

# 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)

# Saskatchewan Assessment & Diagnostic Clinic Contact Information

## Regina Community Clinic

### FASD Centre

1106 Winnipeg St.

Regina, SK S4R 1J6

[P] 306.543.7880 ext. 268

<https://www.reginacommunityclinic.ca/fasd/diagnosis-assessments/>

## Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region

### Child and Youth Services

1680 Albert St.

Regina, SK S4P 2S6

[P] 306.766.6700

## Prince Albert Health Region

### Child and Youth Services

Lower Level, Victoria Square

2345 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, Box 3003

Prince Albert, SK S6V 6G1

[P] 306.765.6068

## Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program

### Kinsmen Children's Centre

1319 Colony St.

Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1

[P] 306.655.1070

[https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/](https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/locations_services/Services/Alvin-Buckwold/Pages/Home.aspx)

[locations\\_services/Services/Alvin-Buckwold/Pages/Home.aspx](https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/locations_services/Services/Alvin-Buckwold/Pages/Home.aspx)

## Saskatoon Genetics/Teratology Clinic

### Royal University Hospital

Saskatoon, SK

[P] 306.966.8112

## Adult FASD Assessments

### Dr. Gerald Block

Saskatoon, SK

[P] 306.373.3110

## Onion Lake FASD Diagnostic Team

PO Box 70

Onion Lake, SK S0M 2E0

[P] 306.344.2330

[E] [jolene.harwood@onionlakehealth.org](mailto:jolene.harwood@onionlakehealth.org)

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