

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Members of the CanFASD Research Network to provide a FASD perspective at substance use conference in Ottawa**

*(November 19, 2019)* Members of the Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD) will be attending and presenting at the CCSA's Issue of Substance Conference in Ottawa, Ontario from November 25, 2019 to November 27, 2019.

CanFASD is Canada's first ever national research network devoted to addressing the complexities of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol in the womb. It affects approximately 4% of Canadians, more than cerebral palsy, autism and Down Syndrome combined. CanFASD works to better our understanding of this disorder and improve outcomes for those affected by FASD. Their presence at the Issues of Substance Conference will provide a much-needed perspective on the complex relationship between FASD and substance use.

The Issues of Substance conference Canada's only national conference that brings together experts from a wide range of disciplines to address issues relating to substance use and addiction in Canada. This year's theme highlights the importance of research and real-life experiences to provide effective solutions addressing substance use in Canada. To learn more about the CCSA's 2019 Issues of Substance Conference please visit their website: <https://issuesofsubstance.ca>

Along with other agencies and organizations such as the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH), the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), CanFASD has chosen to sponsor this event. The support of these organizations and more makes it possible for the Issues of Substance conference to function on such an enormous scale.

There is an incredibly complex relationship between FASD and substance use. Substance use can impact FASD prevention, diagnosis, and treatment initiatives, but substance use can also be impacted by this disorder. The National FASD Database has found that 48% of individuals diagnosed with FASD are using substances, and research suggests that approximately 56,000 Canadians with FASD have substance use and addiction problems. To learn more about the National FASD Database click here: <https://canfasd.ca/topics/diagnosis/#nationaldatabase>

CanFASD is using diverse research methods to develop innovative solutions and resources to address FASD in Canada. CanFASD uses a multidisciplinary approach to develop resources and solutions that consider FASD in relation to all areas of an individual's life, from housing and

education to substance use and mental health. This approach listens to the voices of researchers and professions from a number of different fields, as well as the experiences of individuals with FASD, their families, and their communities. From this they are able to develop solutions that effectively support these individuals and improve prevention efforts.

CanFASD hopes their presence at the CCSA conference will help to improve understanding of the impacts of FASD and its relationship to substance use. They seek to strengthen partnerships with related organizations across Canada and improve FASD research, practice, and policy to better outcomes for all Canadians.

**Quotes:**

"CanFASD is very pleased to attend this event as sponsors and presenters. FASD is a complicated disorder to prevent, and a unique population to support. Improving our understanding around substance use and educating mental health professionals on these complexities is an important step to improving these outcomes."

**Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director, CanFASD**

"We are so excited to be a part of this national learning and sharing event on substance use and addiction. We hope our presence can help emphasize the importance of including FASD in conversations about substance use and mental health.

**Kathy Unsworth, Managing Director, CanFASD**

**About CanFASD:**

*CanFASD is Canada's first national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. CanFASD works collaboratively with researchers and partners across the nation to address complexities of FASD. Our mission is to produce and maintain national, collaborative research for all Canadians, leading to prevention strategies and improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.*

**To speak with a CanFASD expert regarding CanFASD's participation at the CCSA Issues of Substance Conference please contact:**

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**For more information on CanFASD, please visit:**

<http://www.canfasd.ca/>