**HOW TO USE THIS PACKAGE**

Below is a template news release for use during FASD Awareness Month. Media organizations want to tell stories from their local communities. Be sure to include local “flavor” in your release. Talk about what your organization is doing, share stories from community members, or highlight what events are going on in your city. Keep your paragraphs short and catchy – you can provide more detail when they contact you for additional information. There is space to do this in the [ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION & LOCAL EVENTS – IF APPLICABLE] section.

Be sure to check the *date* and *colour* of your local light up and adjust on this release if needed. If there is no landmark that will be lit up in your city ([see our list of confirmed locations](https://canfasd.ca/fasd-awareness-month/canada-rocks-red/)) you can adjust the opening sentence to say: *“On [DATE], [CITY] will be wearing red as part of an international campaign to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).”* Provide the contact information of your spokesperson or someone within your organization who will respond in a timely manner.

Send it to your local media stations (radio, television, and print) in a short email. If you don’t have a list of local media contacts, you can usually find their contact information on their website. Copy the media release text into the body of the email in addition to sending a PDF attachment of the release. You may have to follow up with a second email or phone call. Be ready to do an interview on short notice – prepare your spokesperson ahead of time. You can use the key messages document attached below for reference.

**TEMPLATE MEDIA RELEASE**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**[LOCAL ORGANIZATION/CITY] participating in national campaign raising awareness of hidden disability**

*(Month, Day, 2023)* On September [9], 2022, [LANDMARK] in [CITY] will be lit up red as part of a national campaign to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Red became a symbol for FASD after RJ Formanek, an advocate with FASD, wore red shoes to talk about FASD on the international stage. From there, the Red Shoes Rock movement was born and has spread across the globe. Red shoes symbolize the strengths and uniqueness of this community.

FASD is a lifelong disability that impacts the brain and body of individuals who were exposed to alcohol during fetal development. Despite being one of Canada’s leading neurodevelopmental disabilities (impacting more than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined), FASD is often overlooked by community members and leaders alike. This campaign hopes to shine light on this hidden disability and promote action to address it.

[ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION & LOCAL EVENTS – IF APPLICABLE]

September 1st marks the start of FASD Awareness Month. Landmarks and monuments in provinces from coast to coast will be lighting up red on International FASD Awareness Day on September 9th and throughout the month of September. This year’s theme for FASD Awareness Month is *Uniting Our Strengths: Finding Solutions Together.* FASD is a very complex issue that intersects with many different fields. The impacts of FASD matter to the whole community. We all have a role to play and need to work together to find solutions.

**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 improves support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.*

**QUOTES:**

*“FASD is a Canada-wide concern, so we’re excited to see participation in this event from landmarks all across the country. We hope this movement can shine the light on this disorder that is often ignored and overlooked in Canada.”*

**Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director, Canada FASD Research Network**

*[ADD QUOTE(S) FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBER (I.E. MAYOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INDIVIDUAL WITH FASD]*

**[NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]**

**Contact:**

[MEDIA CONTACT NAME]

[TITLE, ORGANIZATION]

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

**For more information on CanFASD and this campaign, please visit:**

<https://canfasd.ca/fasd-awareness-month/canada-rocks-red/>

**KEY MESSAGES**

You can refer to these key messages when preparing for an interview with a reporter about FASD Awareness activities in September.

About FASD

* FASD stands for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol during fetal development.
* FASD is one of the leading neurodevelopmental disabilities in Canada, affecting 4% of the Canadian population. That’s more people than Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, and Tourette’s Syndrome combined. This is a conservative estimate based on the most recent research.
* No alcohol is safest during pregnancy. If you’re pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or at risk for an unplanned pregnancy, experts recommend you go alcohol free.
* We all have a role to play in FASD prevention. The more we talk about the social and structural factors influencing alcohol consumption during pregnancy, the more we are able to understand and act together on FASD related issues.
* Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need special supports to help them succeed with many different parts of their daily lives. Although it is a lifelong disability, appropriate supports and interventions will help people with FASD thrive.

About FASD Day and FASD Month

* International FASD Awareness Day is held annually on September 9th. It was first held in 1999. FASD Day is held on the 9th day of the 9th month to highlight the importance of going alcohol-free during the full 9 months of pregnancy.
* September is FASD Awareness Month. The Government of Canada officially recognized FASD Month in 2020.
* Landmarks across Canada are lighting up red on FASD Awareness Day and throughout September to raise awareness of this disability and celebrate the accomplishments of those with FASD.