

MEDIA RELEASE

FASD Month celebrated across Canada

(September 1, 2024) An advocate is encouraging professionals to make use of available training to learn more about how to support those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) this September.

September 9th is International FASD Awareness Day. First celebrated in 1999, FASD day is devoted to raising awareness of this disability to improve FASD prevention, diagnosis, and support initiatives. This year's theme is *Everyone Plays a Part*.

Parents and caregivers of people with FASD are struggling to find professionals that know how to help. Shana Mohr works at the FASD Network of Saskatchewan, she also has a daughter with FASD. She has faced the ongoing challenge of finding professionals with a deep understanding of FASD who can provide meaningful support to her daughter.

"When professionals have a deep understanding of FASD, it fosters their ability to create an authentic connection with my daughter, which builds trust, strengthens relationships, and sets her up for success," **says Mohr**. "When FASD is misunderstood, it can lead to unintentional harm."

There's a real enthusiasm from professionals to understand about FASD but often workers don't have the resources they need to learn about it. Some Canadian provinces are focused on additional training for professionals to improve outcomes locally.

The Government of Alberta has made introductory courses about FASD free for all Albertans to build provincial knowledge and awareness about the disability. Workforce training in FASD is also mandatory in some sectors. New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have made similar efforts to make FASD training a priority.

"Provinces and territories that invest in their workforces and prioritize FASD-informed practice are leagues ahead the rest of Canada in terms of addressing FASD," **says Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director of the Canada FASD Research Network**.

Many options for FASD training exist across the country, including local training programs and evidence-based online training courses. When professionals who interact with clients with FASD are uneducated, it can have a detrimental effect on their ability to support those clients.

This FASD Awareness Month, advocates are emphasizing the importance of everyone playing their part to learn about and come together to address FASD.

Quotes:

Shana Mohr, Training Manager at the FASD Network of Saskatchewan said: "When professionals have a deep understanding of FASD, it fosters their ability to create an authentic connection with my daughter, which builds trust, strengthens relationships, and sets her up for success. When FASD is misunderstood, it can lead to unintentional harm, highlighting the need for care that is not only evidence-based, and FASD-informed but also compassionate and tailored to the unique needs of those with FASD."

Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director of the Canada FASD Research Network said:

"Provinces and territories that invest in their workforces and prioritize FASD-informed practice are leagues ahead the rest of Canada in terms of addressing FASD. Professionals' access to proper training about FASD has a direct impact on people with living experience's health and wellbeing. Without early and appropriate support from professionals, people with FASD have an increased risk of mental health, suicide, involvement in the justice system, addiction and homelessness. While we wait for the National FASD Framework to be implemented, there are still things we can do as communities to play our part in changing this."

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 in the womb. 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. [Find out more](#) about the disability on the CanFASD website.

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For more information, please visit: <https://canfasd.ca/fasd-awareness-month/>

The Canada FASD Research Network has online courses to help people learn more about FASD in their profession: <https://elearning.canfasd.ca/>