

# 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> and the FASD Screen and Referral Form for Youth Probation Officers<sup>5</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

# British Columbia Assessment & Diagnostic Clinic Contact Information

A = Adult Clinic C = Child Clinic

## Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Team C

Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children  
4500 Oak St. Vancouver, BC V6H 3N1  
[P] 604.875.2345  
[www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/  
our-services](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/sunny-hill-health-centre/our-services)

## Beacon Community Services C

2723 Quadra St. Victoria, BC V8T 4E5  
[P] Administration: 250.658.6407  
[P] Child, Youth, & Family Services: 250.656.0134  
[beaconcs.ca](http://beaconcs.ca)

## The Asante Centre C

#103, 22356 McIntosh Ave. Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3C1  
[P] 604.467.7101  
[www.asantecentre.org](http://www.asantecentre.org)

## Fraser Developmental Clinic C

Suite #261-610 6th St. New Westminster, BC V3L 3C2  
[P] 604.522.7979  
[fraserdevelopmental.ca](http://fraserdevelopmental.ca)

## Queen Alexander Centre for Children's Health C

Vancouver Island Health Authority  
2400 Arbutus Rd. Victoria, BC V8N 1V7  
[P] 250.519.6154  
[www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/hospitals-health-centre-  
locations/queen-alexandra-centre-childrens-health](http://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/hospitals-health-centre-locations/queen-alexandra-centre-childrens-health)

## Nanaimo Child Development Centre (NCDC) C

1135 Nelson St. Nanaimo, BC V9S 2K4  
[P] 250.753.0251  
[www.nanaimocdc.com/programs-services/vican/](http://www.nanaimocdc.com/programs-services/vican/)

## Northern Health Assessment Network [NHAN] C

1444 Edmonton St. Prince George, BC V2M 6W5  
[P] 250.645.7700  
[www.northernhealth.ca/services/programs/northern-  
health-assessment-network-nhan](http://www.northernhealth.ca/services/programs/northern-health-assessment-network-nhan)

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

Community Health & Services Centre  
505 Doyle Avenue. Kelowna, BC V1Y 0C5  
[P] 250.763.4122  
[www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)

## FASD Diagnostic Assessment Clinic for Adults A

A program of Independent Living Vernon  
Suite #104, 3402 27 Avenue. Vernon, BC V1T 1S1  
[P] 250.938.5022  
[www.ilvernon.ca/index.php/what-we-do/fasd](http://www.ilvernon.ca/index.php/what-we-do/fasd)