

MEDIA RELEASE

“Failure, after failure”: new study reveals systemic barriers to housing for people with FASD

4 August 2026 A study published just yesterday [exposes major gaps](#) in disability and housing supports for people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Canadian researchers interviewed people with FASD and their caregivers, support workers, housing service providers and policy makers. Their work revealed Canada-wide barriers that prevent people with FASD from accessing safe, stable housing.

Participants interviewed in the study described a system marked by unaffordable rents, long waitlists, limited long-term housing options, high turnover in support staff, and restrictive rules that limit autonomy. They called disability funding “inadequate” and difficult to access, describing the process as a “bureaucratic nightmare.”

FASD, a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability linked to prenatal alcohol exposure, affects an estimated 4% of Canadians. Researchers found that stigma, poverty, and homelessness intersect to further restrict access to appropriate housing and services.

This research outlines entrenched barriers preventing people with FASD from accessing safe, stable housing. Basic needs such as food, internet access, and transportation were repeatedly identified as essential for stability, yet financial supports were widely described as insufficient. Many participants also reported being unable to navigate fragmented systems, leading to repeated setbacks - “failure, after failure, after failure.”

Participants reported that much of the available affordable housing was unsafe or poorly maintained, increasing vulnerability for individuals with FASD. There are some providers scattered throughout the country that have successfully adapted their approaches to ensure their clients with FASD have access to safe housing. However, these initiatives require systemic support to remain sustainable and to be scaled across Canada. As a service provider and caregiver put it: “These are all doable things. We just have to bring the right people together to make it happen.”

The United Nations and Canadian commitments to disability rights affirm equal choice in housing and access to adequate supports. Advocates are now calling for urgent reforms to ensure those rights are meaningfully met for people with disabilities like Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Quotes:

“The study highlights the need for integrated, flexible, and FASD-informed housing and support systems that reduce fragmentation and improve access to care. Increasing awareness and understanding of FASD within the housing sector is identified as a critical step toward improving outcomes and reducing systemic barriers.” **Kathy Unsworth, Executive Director, CanFASD**

“Families require support. We shouldn’t have to fight so hard [to make people understand] that a disability is a disability.” **Caregiver to an individual with FASD**

“These ‘one size fits all’ containers are containers that people with FASD don’t always fit in.” **Housing Service Provider**

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](https://canfasd.ca).

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