

MEDIA RELEASE

CanFASD announces Kathy Unsworth as new Executive Director

Ottawa, ON – March 31, 2025 The Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD) is proud to announce Kathy Unsworth will be moving into a new role as the Executive Director, effective April 1, 2025.

Unsworth will be replacing Audrey McFarlane, who is scaling back her leadership responsibilities after eight years as Executive Director. McFarlane will remain with the organization, transitioning into a new role as the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives.

Kathy Unsworth has served as Managing Director at CanFASD since 2013. She has been instrumental in driving forward national initiatives, including advocacy for Bill S-253, the proposed National FASD Framework. Unsworth’s expertise in public health, community development, and evidence-based policy will be critical as CanFASD continues its mission to ensure that people with FASD receive the support they deserve.

“I am deeply honored to take on the role of Executive Director,” **said Unsworth.** “This is a pivotal moment for FASD in Canada. With over 1.5 million Canadians with FASD, there is an urgent need for a coordinated, evidence-based approach to support individuals and families. Together with our Board of Directors and our dedicated team, I am committed to advancing CanFASD’s research, advocacy, and resources to improve the lives of those impacted by FASD.”

“Kathy is the natural choice to take on the role of Executive Director, building on Audrey’s legacy of innovation and strategic leadership. She brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to advancing CanFASD’s mission, making her the ideal person to guide our organization into its next chapter,” says **Board Chair, Olecia Walker.** “We are confident that under her leadership, CanFASD will continue to drive impactful research to improve outcomes for people with FASD and their communities.”

CanFASD has made significant strides since its founding in 2005, becoming Canada’s national voice for FASD. The organization’s research, resources, and advocacy efforts have contributed to the development of groundbreaking initiatives, including the FASD National Database, the National FASD Framework, and a wide range of practical tools for families,

professionals, and communities. As CanFASD continues to expand its influence and reach, Unsworth's leadership will be pivotal in achieving the organization's strategic priorities, including influencing policy, increasing collaboration across sectors, and advancing prevention and support initiatives.

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](#).

Media Contact:

Fiona Binns
Communications Coordinator
fiona.binns@canfasd.ca