

MEDIA RELEASE

International FASD Awareness Day shines light on need for National FASD Strategy in Canada

(September 7, 2022) Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is the leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability in Canada, affecting 4% of the population. Not solely a healthcare issue, FASD intersects with homelessness, substance use, education, criminal justice, mental health, child welfare, social services, family health, and more.

The Government of Canada officially recognized September as FASD Awareness Month in 2020, and since then, we use this time to encourage communities to continue to work towards increased awareness of FASD. This year's theme, Building Strengths and Abilities, recognizes that while much of the discussion about FASD has focused on challenges, by neglecting to explore the successes of individuals with FASD, we fail to recognize their immense potential and celebrate the unique contributions that each individual has to offer.

FASD is a complex and lifelong disability – and the FASD community relies heavily on both informal and formal supports, whose effectiveness and availability are dependent on the knowledge of FASD across professions and within communities. To ensure that people with FASD have the support they need to build on their unique strengths abilities, and so that their caregivers can support them in doing so, the Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) has been calling for a National FASD Strategy to support equitable access to prevention, diagnostics, and support services across the provinces and territories.

During FASD Month, we invite the FASD community join us in changing the conversation around FASD by celebrating your strengths and abilities.

Quotes:

“People with FASD, their caregivers, and women who are pregnant and parenting must be able to access supports that are appropriate recognizing the diversity of Canada’s population, regions, and communities.”

Senator Pat Duncan

“Through interdisciplinary collaboration, we must work towards a comprehensive national strategy that standardizes guidelines, improves diagnostic and data reporting tools, expands

knowledge bases, facilitates information exchange and continues to increase public and professional awareness.”

Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia

“We are in desperate need for a National FASD Strategy to support the 1.5 million Canadians with FASD and their families, and improve prevention efforts and diagnostic capacity for this disability. This is a Canada-wide issue that needs a Canada-wide response.”

Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director, Canada FASD Research Network

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 improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

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For more information on the need for a National FASD Strategy please visit:

<https://canfasd.ca/national-fasd-strategy/>