

I support a National FASD Framework

Federal Candidate Tip Sheet

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is one of Canada's leading neurodevelopmental disabilities, impacting an estimated 4% of the population, or 1.6 million Canadians. FASD is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of people prenatally exposed to alcohol. Each person with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.

How does FASD impact Canadians?

People with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. FASD is a lifelong disability but individuals with FASD can thrive with early diagnosis and effective supports.

FASD is a very complex disability that crosses many different disciplines. It is not only a healthcare issue; FASD intersects with homelessness, substance use, education, criminal justice, mental health, child welfare, social services, family health, and more.

Individuals with FASD are 20 times more likely to experience substance use challenges and over 90% of will experience a least one mental health challenge in their lifetime. The rates of suicide ideation in teens with FASD is 35.2%, with 13% reporting a least one serious suicide attempt *in the last year*.

Why do we need a National FASD Framework?

A National Framework is a Canada-wide plan to address FASD. It outlines the best way to improve FASD prevention, intervention, and diagnostic efforts across the country.

FASD is challenging to recognize. As a result, it often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Individuals and their families face multiple layers of stigma that impact their ability to access suitable supports, quality education, stable employment, and appropriate care. FASD is a unique disability, socially rooted in its cause and our cultural relationship with alcohol and is often intergenerational in nature.

Canada is a world leader in FASD research, but this research is not always put into practice at the federal level. Due to the complicated nature of the disability a coordinated approach to prevention, diagnosis, intervention, and lifetime support is needed. Many sectors of Government (such as health and justice) require the resources, and political will, to work together to ensure that the unique needs of Canadians with FASD are met. **That is why we need a National FASD Framework.**

What should a National FASD Framework include?

A National Framework should be created using current evidence, best practices, and feedback from key stakeholders. This Framework should:

- Outline means to address training and education of professionals;
- Identify means to promote research and information-sharing within and between governments;
- Set national standards for FASD prevention and diagnosis, and support for those impacted;
- Outline a strategy to increase awareness of FASD and the risks of alcohol consumption in pregnancy; and
- Identify any other measures to improving our response to FASD.

Example Approaches

We can look to other governments for direction. In response to a Senate Inquiry into FASD, the Government of Australia has:

- Committed to fully addressing six of the 32 key recommendations, including:
 - Updating clinical guidelines;
 - Strengthening diagnostic capacity;
 - Streamlining early childhood interbention access;
 - Expanding early support for developmental stages;
 - Improving access to disability support in remote communities; and
 - Supporting First Nations-led FASD initiatives.
- Supported 14 recommendations in principle, meaning further policy development and consultation will be required;
- Noted the importance of 11 recommendations, but recognising that responsibility for implementation lies with State and Territory Governments or other sectors.
- Not supported 1 out of 32 recommendations.

There is precedent for a National FASD Framework in Canada. Canada has national frameworks in place for other disabilities like [autism spectrum disorder](#). FASD is estimated to be [2 times more common than autism](#).

What can you do to show your support?

- Commit to supporting a National FASD Framework
- Learn more about FASD in your area and discipline
- Speak to members of your party and other government representatives about the need for a National FASD Framework
- Show support for a #NationalFASDFramework on social media

Example Social Media Posts

4% of Canadians have #FASD. Early interventions and diagnosis can help. This is why I support a #NationalFASDFramework.

4% of Canadians have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), more than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined. That's why I support a #NationalFASDFramework.

1.6 million Canadians have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (#FASD), but with proper supports and resources, people with FASD can succeed. That's why I support a #NationalFASDFramework.

We need a #NationalFASDFramework to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Canada. Increasing funding to our healthcare system is not enough.

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.

For more information, please contact:

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