Supporting those working to address the issue of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

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Knowledge Centre team

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The Knowledge Centre:

- a web resource designed to provide quality, up-to-date information about alcohol and other drugs
- collaboration with three National Research Centre's
- guidance from National Reference Group
- specific FASD portal
Welcome to the AOD Knowledge Centre Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) portal – for people working, studying or interested in addressing the harms of alcohol use in pregnancy. Reducing FASD requires a shared responsibility for a healthy pregnancy - this includes family, community and society. There is an ongoing need to address the social and emotional, and economic factors that contribute greatly to the disproportionate harms that exist among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We aim to provide a central collection of policies and strategies, publications, resources and training materials supporting prevention and management of FASD in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- Key facts
- Policies and strategies
- Publications
- Health promotion resources
- Health Practice resources
- Programs and projects
- Organisations
- Workforce

Expand all
Key facts

- Diagnosis of FASD
- How alcohol harms the unborn baby
- Alcohol and breastfeeding
- Treatment for FASD?
- Preventing FASD
- FASD in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- What is being done about FASD.

What is Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe the range of mental and physical effects on the developing unborn baby that are caused by drinking alcohol during pregnancy. These effects range from brain damage and poor growth to birth defects and learning problems [1].

There is no single internationally accepted classification system for FASD [1]. The Australian guide to the diagnosis of FASD was developed to standardise diagnosis of FASD in Australia as well as to assist clinicians in the referral and management of FASD.

The overarching diagnostic term of FASD simplifies the terminology and emphasises the primary importance of the severe neurodevelopmental impairment that results from an acquired brain injury caused by alcohol exposure before birth.

Diagnosis of FASD

The diagnosis of FASD is complex and ideally requires a multidisciplinary team of clinicians to evaluate individuals for [1]:

- Confirmation of alcohol exposure during pregnancy
- Neurodevelopmental problems (impairments to development of brain and central nervous system)
- Facial abnormalities in the context of a general physical and developmental assessment.

Currently, the diagnosis of FASD can be divided into one of two sub-categories:

1. FASD with three sentinel facial features (similar to the previous category of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome without a requirement for growth impairment)
2. FASD with less than three sentinel facial features (which encompasses the previous Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Neurodevelopmental Disorder-Alcohol Exposed category) [2].

Sentinel features of FASD

Children who have been exposed to alcohol during the first trimester of pregnancy may display facial features known as ‘sentinel’ facial features of FASD [1]. These facial features are:

- Small eye openings (short palpebral fissures)
- A thin upper lip
- A flattened groove between the upper lip and nose (smooth philtrum)

These facial features become less visible as the child becomes older.
A collection of national and state policies for addressing FASD:

- Indigenous specific
- General

Can be further categorised by state and territory.
Publications

Unique collection of FASD publications (emphasis on Australian content):

- General
- Specific topics
- Key references
- Conference presentations

This section provides recent reference details and, where available, links and abstracts for general publications relating to Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. References include journal articles, reports, theses, and other literature. To access our complete database please use our bibliography.

2016

Amnesty International Australia (2016)

'Heads held high': keeping Queensland kids out of detention, strong in culture and community.

Sydney: Amnesty International Australia

Links
- View report: 'Heads held high': keeping Queensland kids out of detention, strong in culture and community.
- View information: 'Heads held high': keeping Queensland kids out of detention, strong in culture and community.
- View information: 7 things you may not know about prison for Queensland kids
- View website: Amnesty International Australia


Mechanisms of influence: alcohol industry submissions to the inquiry into fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Drug and Alcohol Review; Early view (http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/dar.12339):

Links
- View abstract: Mechanisms of influence: alcohol industry submissions to the inquiry into fetal alcohol spectrum disorders
- View article: Mechanisms of influence: alcohol industry submissions to the inquiry into fetal alcohol spectrum disorders
- View website: Drug and Alcohol Review
Health promotion and practice resources

Health promotion resources

- Winjjangam Mamli Waranjam - Together we walk on country - Launch video
- Making FASD history in the Fitzroy Valley
- FASD - Bega Cominigugu
- Stay strong and healthy: pregnancy resources for Aboriginal women
- Stay: strong babies, bright futures - keeping healthy during pregnancy
- Stay strong and healthy pregnancy videos
- Stay in strong drugs and alcohol

Guidelines

- Australian guide to the diagnosis of FASD
- The FASD handbook for health professionals
- WA Health Audit-C training guide
- FASD and the justice system
- Working with women engaged in alcohol and other drug treatment: NADA practice resource
- Stay strong and healthy: pregnancy videos
- Yarning about alcohol and pregnancy
- Yarning about alcohol and Pregnancy: staff advice card
- Standard drinks guide
- Advising Aboriginal women about alcohol and pregnancy: information for health professionals
- Information for health professionals on assessing alcohol consumption in pregnancy using AUDIT-C

When you click on one of the headings of the table, the list will be sorted according to that heading. For more information about the resource, click on the title.

If you have information you would like to have included on this page please contact us.

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Australian guide to the diagnosis of FASD (2016)

Author: Bower C, Elliott EJ

Publisher: Telethon Kids Institute

City: Perth, WA

Description:
This guide was produced to assist clinicians in the diagnosis, referral and management of Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). It provides clinicians with a diagnostic criteria for FASD, which was agreed upon following a series of clinical guidelines, along with consultation with clinical experts.

Content covered by the Australian guide to the diagnosis of Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) includes:
- assessing maternal alcohol use
- assessing neurodevelopmental impairment
- assessing facial features
- growth assessment
- formulating a diagnosis
- discussing the diagnosis and developing a management plan
- reporting a FASD diagnosis.

The guide can be accessed as a single document, or as individual components, which include forms, resources and information sheets.

- Australian FASD diagnostic assessment form
- Australian FASD diagnostic assessment summary form
- Australian FASD management plan form
- Australian FASD diagnostic assessment consent form
- Assessment of facial features
- Syndromes with constellations of features which overlap with FASD
- Referral and screening guidelines
- Standard drink sizes for commonly consumed drinks
- Information for FASD diagnostic assessment for individuals and caregivers
- Information for clinicians: issues that individuals and their caregivers may experience during the FASD diagnostic assessment process
- Information for individuals and caregivers after diagnostic assessment
- Information and resources for clinicians after diagnostic assessment.

The guide additionally contains the Australian Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) diagnostic instrument, as well as information on how to use it.

The guideline was developed by the Telethon Kids Institute in collaboration with the University of Sydney.

Assistance from the Telethon Kids Institute.
Programs and projects

This section provides details and links for programs and projects that address Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Programs and projects are listed by title, but you can also select to list them by reach and focus.

Details and links (where available) relating to relevant programs, projects and lessons learned are collected here.

When you click on one of the headings of the table, the list will be sorted according to that heading. For more information about the program, click on the title.

If you have information you would like to have included on this page please contact us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Prisons and Offenders Support Services</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and Pregnancy Project</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol and Pregnancy: What are the Risks?</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol, Pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Milestones Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anyinginy Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder project</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asking Questions About Alcohol in Pregnancy (AQUA) Study</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banksia Hill FASD Project</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bennett Brook Disability, Justice Centre</td>
<td>WA</td>
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Banksia Hill FASD Project

Overview

The Banksia Hill FASD Project aims to address an urgent need to understand the extent of involvement of young people with Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) in the Western Australian (WA) justice system, and develop appropriate management strategies for these young people.

The project is being conducted at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, with all young people sentenced to detention at Banksia Hill during a one-year period offered screening and assessment for FASD. The screening takes about 15 minutes, followed by assessment sessions by a paediatrician, psychologist, occupational therapist and speech pathologist to provide information for a diagnosis of FASD.

A report for each person assessed will provide:

- A provisional diagnosis
- Assessment findings and performance
- Individual strengths and difficulties
- Recommendations for improved management strategies for the young person
- Welfare, if appropriate

Discussion of this information with the young person and their parent/guardian/carer will facilitate improved support for young people with FASD during detention and in the community following their release. In addition, an information and training program for managing young people affected by FASD will be delivered to the workforce at the detention centre.

This research will establish the first Australian estimates of FASD among young people in detention, and will contribute to the understanding of factors which influence the over representation of Aboriginal young people in the criminal justice system.

This program is an initiative of the Telethon Kids Institute, with funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Adapted from: Telethon Kids Institute.

Captures the range of work being done by communities to prevent and address FASD:

- Education
- Management and support
- Justice
- Research.
Provides information from across Australia on current training and skill development opportunities around FASD.
In summary

The FASD portal aims to support workers:

- skill development opportunities
- incorporate regular screening and assessment into their work with clients
- support women to make informed decisions about their alcohol use
- alert people about the issue of FASD in the community.
92% of users identified our health promotion/practice resources section as useful
60-80% of users find the FASD portal to be useful or very useful
24% of users access the Knowledge Centre programs section for developing their own initiatives
32% of users reported continuing professional development as a reason to use the Knowledge Centre

“It's a great resource and has a lot of information on it. It's a one-stop-shop of all things to do with AOD work. I have found it very useful.”
Conclusion

The FASD portal seeks to contribute to providing the evidence base to prevent and reduce FASD in the community.
Thank you!

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