



## FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan Inc.

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# Network News

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## A Note to Readers

by Beverly Palibroda

The FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan recently held our first ever Parent and Caregiver Retreat. The event was an opportunity for parents and caregivers to meet others, learn about services and resources, and most importantly gain a greater appreciation for the importance of self-care. Thank you to all who attended; we are grateful for your participation.

The week of November 18—24th is National Addictions Awareness Week. For this reason, the current issue of *Network News* is highlighting the topic of FASD and addictions. Families and professionals often have questions about this topic. They want to learn how to avoid problems with addictions and how to help teens and adults who are struggling with addictions. Because of a lack of information and research this is a hard topic to tackle. Our hope is that by addressing FASD and addictions we might offer some ideas to those of you who are facing this issue in your family.



The National Addictions Awareness Week Ribbon was developed to raise awareness of addictions. The **different sized squares** in the ribbon represent the many forms of addictions. The **different colors** symbolize that addictions do not discriminate and affect all races, genders and ages.

## Did You Know???

The Network is hosting two **FASD Workshops** in December. There is no cost to participants and lunch will be provided. Guest presenter is Dan Dubovsky.

**Melfort:** Wednesday, December 5, 2007  
Melfort Travelodge 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

**Moose Jaw:** Monday, December 10, 2007  
Heritage Inn 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

For more information or to register for either event call the Network office.

## Third National Biennial Conference on Adolescents and Adults with FASD

*FASD and Mental Health: The Wisdom of Practice*

April 10-12th, 2008

**Location:** Vancouver, BC

**Website:** <http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Adults.html>

## Canada Northwest FASD Partnership Conference

May 21 - 24, 2008

**Location:** Banff, Alberta, Canada

**Website:** <http://www.cnfasdpartnership.ca/index.cfm>



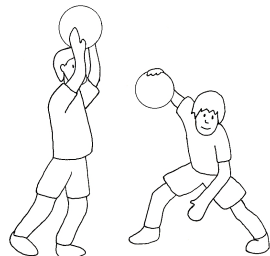


## How you can Help a Teen or Adult Avoid Drug and Alcohol Use and Abuse— FASD Tip #18

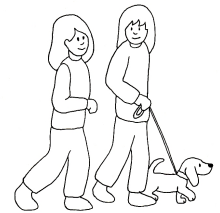
Many of you have probably seen the Network's FASD Tips for Parents and Caregivers. Below are a few highlights of Tip #18. Visit our website to download the entire tip or call the office for a copy of Tip #18 or the entire set of 20 FASD Tips.

### Some Tips and Teaching Strategies:

1. Begin to teach and talk about drugs and alcohol early and often. Use clear and direct language along with real life examples.
2. Be specific about which drinks are alcohol and which drugs are illegal drugs. It can be confusing to know the difference between medicine and illegal drugs.
3. Create family rules about drugs and alcohol. Be a good role model to members of your family.
4. Teens need to know that it is against the law for them to use alcohol or drugs and that it is also against the law to have alcohol or drugs in their backpack, purse, room or car.
5. Help teens and adults to find good role models and friends that do not use drugs and alcohol.
6. Help them to find other activities that are fun and provide opportunity to experience success and feel a sense of belonging. A music group, team sport, or other recreational activity is a good choice and gives them something to do and can build positive experiences.



7. When problems arise, like sadness, boredom or feeling alone, deal with these things in positive ways so that drugs or alcohol are not used to self-medicate or dull feelings of emotional pain.
8. Use role play, practice and rehearsal to help teens or adults learn to avoid drugs and alcohol. Practice over and over how to say no and how to stay safe.
9. Have a plan in place to deal with situations where drugs or alcohol are available and they find it is hard to say no to using. Encourage them to phone home or leave immediately.
10. Support a healthy sense of self so teens and adults do not use drugs and alcohol to fit in or be accepted. Encourage safe alcohol-free activities with positive role models.
11. If a person with FASD develops an addiction, contact the Network for information about FASD to share with the addictions counsellor. To improve the chances of success, the counsellor will need to accommodate the unique needs and recognize the brain differences of a person with FASD.
12. Find someone to talk to and to support you. Other parents can share ideas and help you to feel that you are not alone. Call the Network for support.



**Toll Free Warm Line:**

**1-866-673-3276**





## FASD and Alcohol and Other Drug Use

The use of alcohol and other drugs by youth and adults with FASD is an extremely concerning issue. A major concern is that the use of alcohol and other drugs can quickly develop into an addiction with serious consequences. It is true, addiction does not discriminate and we are all vulnerable, however our loved ones with FASD are more vulnerable to this risk due to the primary and secondary disabilities associated with prenatal alcohol exposure.

Several of the **primary disabilities** of FASD can increase the chances that someone could become addicted to drugs or alcohol.

**Difficulty understanding consequences and memory problems** may make it harder to link using alcohol or drugs to the negative consequences and bad decisions made while intoxicated or high, such as losing your job or a destroying important relationships.



**Impulsivity** can lead to drinking and drug use. Even if an individual understands the negative consequences that go along with using, he or she also knows that using is pleasurable in the moment. They may act on impulse when they are in the situation.

**Poor decision making**, problems with weighing options and predicting the outcome of possible actions often results in bad decisions about using alcohol and drugs. Poor decisions about when to stop using or how much to use are particularly dangerous. Similarly, decisions about when, with whom or in which situations to use or not use are also confusing.

**Dysmaturity** is the idea that an individual is developmentally younger than his or her chronological age (Malbin, 2006). Dysmaturity can lead to people using drugs or alcohol before they are mature enough to understand the consequences. For example, a 20 year old with FASD might have a developmental age of 13. Although a 20 year old may be able to drink alcohol responsibly, we wouldn't expect a 13 year old to be able to handle that same responsibility.

**Secondary disabilities** can also increase the chance that someone with FASD may develop an addiction. Experiences such as **homelessness, depression, mental health issues, trouble with the law, and trouble in school or employment** are all problematic. These issues increase stress and confusion often



resulting in chaos. It is common for people with cognitive disabilities to have few strategies for dealing with this stress and few resources to draw upon in times of need. They may only know how to cope with stress in negative ways like using drugs and alcohol to escape problems.

Remember, the brain of an individual with FASD has been injured. For this reason, drugs and alcohol are more dangerous because of the way the drugs and alcohol affect the brain. These substances alter our cognitive processes. There is less activity in the area of the brain that controls planning, evaluating of consequences and decision making.



You might hear this referred to as **executive functioning**. When people are intoxicated they become more impulsive and think less about their actions. For someone with FASD, these cognitive processes are impaired from birth. Adding drugs and alcohol slows down processes that are already injured. It has been suggested that for an individual with this type of brain injury, consuming 3 drinks could slow down their cognitive processes similar to the way 6 drinks affects someone with an unaffected brain. This severe impairment leads individuals with FASD to be more at-risk to make bad decisions and to be victimized.

Individuals with FASD will do better if they do not have the opportunity to experiment with alcohol and other drugs. Casual drinking and drug use is often not an option for someone with a cognitive disability and should be discouraged. One way to avoid addictions is to teach your child or young adult from an early age that it is not ok to use drugs or alcohol. The next article offers some ideas for those families who are supporting a youth or adult who has become involved in using alcohol and other drugs.





## FASD and Addictions: What you can do and where to look for help

Despite all of our efforts to prevent use of alcohol and other drugs, problem use and addictions can still happen. Here are some examples of things that a parent, caregiver or support person can do to help once using has become a problem:

**Become informed.** Know the signs and symptoms of substance use and abuse. As much as you want and hope that an addiction will go away, this problem likely won't solve itself.

**Know the problem.** Find out all you can about the use, when, where, with whom, what happens before and after. Look for patterns, causes or triggers. Once you have gathered all the information a better support plan can be created.

If you can, **address underlying causes** for using. Try to determine why this person is turning to drugs. Consider stress, boredom, pain management, confusion, anxiety, attempts to feel calm, to fit in or other reasons you might think of.

Substance use can lead to chaos and destructive decisions. It is important to **look after yourself**. Try not to step in and become part of the chaos. Some people turn to counselors, clergy, family or community groups to help with self-care.

Keep in mind all that you know about FASD and the **brain differences** that individuals have. Interventions and support need to be based on a sound understanding of FASD.

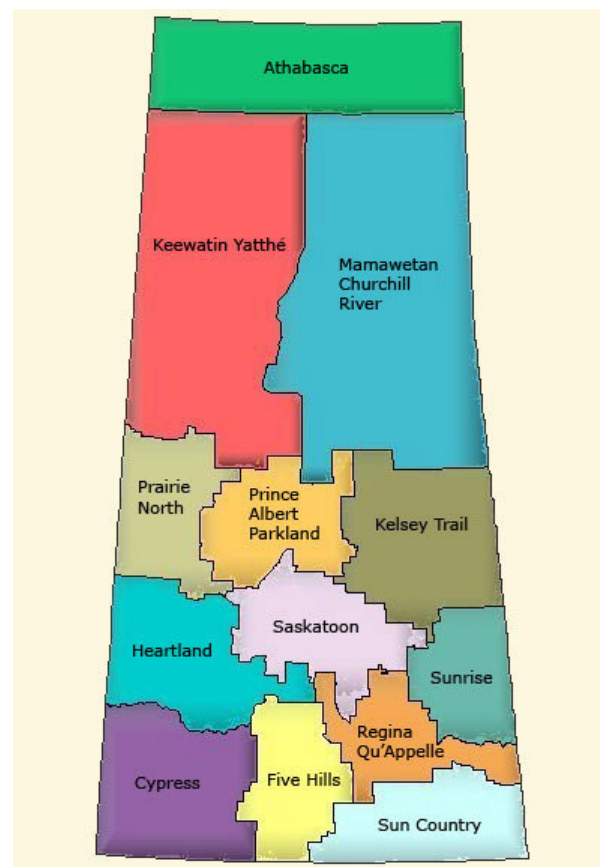
When seeking addictions treatment try to find treatment that works with **strengths and abilities**. Some individuals with FASD may do better in one-on-one addictions counseling than in groups, others may benefit from the social interaction and structure in programs like AA or NA.

**Share information with the addictions counselor.** You know your child best and you have likely gathered information that can help the addictions counselor. Suggest visual aids, role play or concrete activities rather than “talk” therapy. Brainstorm for new and creative ideas.

Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Services is mandated by Saskatchewan Health to deliver addictions services through each region. The services available to all Saskatchewan residents include inpatient treatment, outpatient services, detoxification services and youth detoxification and stabilization. Contact information for each area can be found online on the Government website or in your local phonebook.

Directory of Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services  
[www.health.gov.sk.ca/treatment-services-directory](http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/treatment-services-directory)

MASCI (Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Incorporated) services are a vital component of alcohol and drug treatment services in SK. MASCI provides rehabilitation, education and prevention services to persons who are affected by substance use. Contact the centre nearest you for specific



Individuals might have addictions to not only drugs and alcohol but other substances and behaviours. Some people with FASD have difficulty with gambling addiction. If someone you know has gambling problems call:

**Problem Gambling HelpLine at 1-800-306-6789**