



FASD Network News

FASD SUPPORT NETWORK
OF SASKATCHEWAN INC.

July 2010 - Issue 25

A Note to our Readers

Hello Friends,

I just typed out the date and issue number above. I am amazed and feel there must be some trickery involved in the speed of the passing months and days.

The month of June kept Network staff busy preparing for and hosting the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM is a time for board and staff to reflect on the events and outcomes of the past year, but also a time of looking forward to the possibilities of what is to come in the next year. Stay tuned for news of Network events and training opportunities. We are in the early planning stages of lots of great things.

As we head into summer, I am sure that families all over the province have been planning for the long days and approaching activities. Summer can be a challenging season because of the many special events that take place. Family gatherings, trips to the lake, cultural celebrations, sleepovers or

weddings can be very exciting and often overwhelming for children, youth and adults with FASD. The high expectations, combined with anticipation and less structure, often spells trouble. This issue of *Network News* might just come in handy. We have included some information and tips for planning ahead and managing a variety of special events and activities that happen throughout the year, but are especially common during the summer.

A strategy to broaden awareness and understanding, used by many families is to request an information package about FASD from the Network. The family then shares the information with extended family members, staff of summer camps, new employers and other community members. Maybe you have a need for an information package? Call us and we will send one your way. Oh, and enjoy your summer activities!

Beverly

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Planning Ahead for Summer Fun —by Beverly Palibroda

One of the lessons I learned early on when I was supporting individuals with disabilities was the importance of planning ahead. It is especially important to prepare for big celebrations, exciting family gatherings or public events with large crowds. This message about the value of thinking ahead and planning for events is echoed in the wisdom of countless parents.

As we consider the coming days of summer, it is not just the activities of a single day or week that need to be planned ahead. The plans need to extend beyond, well beyond, the immediate days and into the future. Parents and caregivers, sometimes without even realizing it, become experts at thinking ahead and doing what needs to be done to ensure that the moments, days, weeks, and months will be more predictable and more successful. Even with careful and detailed planning, events and activities can go wrong. It is important for parents and caregivers to recognize this and have a plan in place for what to do if things do go wrong. It is equally

CREATE MEMORIES...

Take photos at special events and use these photos to create memory books. Memory Books can be especially important for individuals who struggle with memory problems and lose their history.

important for parents and caregivers to plan how they might care for themselves during these unpredictable and stressful times of change or exciting events. While many parents, professionals and family members know how effective planning ahead can be for individuals and families living with FASD, it can be a tough thing to do. We can't always anticipate change and many factors are simply out of our hands. However, there are usually opportunities to plan ahead. In this article, we briefly share a few ideas about why planning ahead works, offer suggestions about which kinds of events can benefit from planning and share a few tips and pointers on how families can plan ahead this summer.

1. Why plan ahead?

You have likely heard it said many times, that every child, youth and adult affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol is unique. That is absolutely true. But, a common trait is that making a change from the everyday routine to a special event is difficult. It is also true that planning ahead and preparing for the change *can* ease the transitions or reduce problems.

A main reason why planning ahead works is that advance notice of an event or a change gives the child, youth or adult

time to think about what this change means. They have time to consider what the event might be like and what might be expected of them. The processing time can ease the discomfort of change, lessen the severity of a reaction or prepare them for success. Remember, success, even if momentary, can build a history of accomplishment and can boost confidence.

2. Which events?

For people with FASD, planning ahead for most events is almost always a good idea. There are some people for whom planning ahead simply creates anxiety. If that is the case, do not involve that person with planning, but keep the preparations to yourself. Prepare yourself so you are ready for the event and set things up to help ensure success at the event. Here are just a few examples of times when families find it most important to plan ahead:

Public events or places — concerts, parades, festivals, ceremonies, movie theatres, malls, galleries or museums.
Family events— parties, weddings, family gatherings, reunions, funerals or vacations.
Group Activities—swimming, summer camp, sports events, birthday parties or sleepovers.
Festive Meals—Restaurants, family meals, outdoor barbeques or picnics.



Appointments or meetings—medical, financial, dental or planning meetings.

Major life changes—moves from one house to another, changes in classroom, getting a new mentor, having a family member with an illness or death in the family.

It is important to remember that some activities or events might be too difficult for some individuals with FASD to attend. It is OK to plan *not* to attend.

3. How can I plan ahead?

Most families already have a range of strategies and accommodations that seem to work best for their loved one with FASD. Try to be creative when considering new strategies and accommodations. You might surprise yourself with your unique ideas! Some reliable tools that help with planning ahead include visual, verbal and written reminders. It is best when these reminders are paired and offer the same consistent information.

Visual reminders of an upcoming event or activity might be picture reminders of the people they will see or a picture of the place they will go. Write the event name and details on a **calendar** or post the information on a bulletin

board or fridge.

Verbal reminders, are more effective when paired with the visual reminders. A verbal reminder could be a telephone call from an Aunt, Grandpa or mentor. **Written reminders**, like a note, a text or email message can be a quick strategy that is sent from others who offer extra support.

In the days leading up to the event, find times to **practice or demonstrate** some of the expected skills needed for the event. The skills might not be transferred perfectly to the actual setting but, they may be more available than if not practiced at all. If unfamiliar clothing is to be worn, consider practicing wearing the unfamiliar outfit (suit, costume, dress) and consider pairing with one preferred piece of clothing.

As preparation goes on at home, it can also be helpful to develop plans or **prepare the environment of the event**. For example, you might enlist the help of a selected number of other guests to provide prompts, encouragement or additional support. Seating arrangements can be modified (table near the exit, chairs at the back etc) and menu items can be arranged in advance. Advance information about the agenda or can help you to decide when it is best to schedule a break or when it might be good to leave early.

Some people like to be active and want a chance to contribute in a safe way. Perhaps it can be arranged so an individual can help with a task, like setting up chairs or decorating the room. This creates a chance for individuals to use their strengths, even in a difficult situation.

If you know that good-byes are hard, find a reason to slip out early to avoid possible problems or stress.

On the day of the event, give thought to what will help the child, youth or adult to participate successfully. Many families encourage the use of **comfort items** like magazines, notebooks, sketchpads, craft items, headphones or snacks. These comfort items can help the individual to cope with the sensory stimulation, set healthy boundaries, remain calm and manage impulsivity. Help them to make good decisions about using their comfort item and to feel reassured that they can use their comfort item if and when they need to.

THINK ABOUT THIS...

Be courageous and hopeful. Know that you and your family have a right to participate in celebrations and exciting events in the best way you can.



Please Help us by Filling out Quick Online Survey

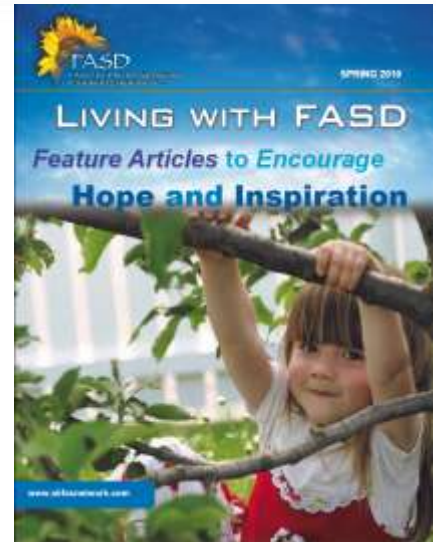
Many of you are probably long time readers of *Network News*. But, you might be less familiar with our twice-yearly publication called *Living with FASD*.

As a way to improve our materials and find out how we can better meet the informational needs of our readers, we are asking for your feedback. You can share your feedback by completing a short, 12 question, survey on our publication *Living with FASD*. Your help is greatly appreciated and this is your chance to offer constructive ideas. It is really easy—here is what you need to do:

If you are a member, or have received the most recent issue of *Living with FASD* in an information package or at an event, please review your copy of *Living with FASD* and then visit the link below for the online survey. Remember, just 12 quick questions!

If you have not received a copy, you can visit our website homepage and click on the heading ***Living with FASD Spring 2010*** to download and read the most recent issue. You are then ready to complete the online survey at the link below.

Finally, if you prefer, you can contact the office and request a paper copy of *Living with FASD*. We will mail a copy out to you so that you can complete the online survey and be a part of this important process.



Here is the link to the Online Survey:

http://www.kwiksurveys.com/online-survey.php?surveyID=KMKDIH_1604003a

The 4th International Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder *The Power of Knowledge: Integrating Research, Policy, and Promising Practice Around the World*



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