

Assessment and Diagnosis of FASD

The assessment and diagnosis process is in-depth and includes a multi-disciplinary team of professionals.

Changes were made to the 2005 Canadian Diagnostic Guidelines, which includes two diagnoses under one category currently being used by doctors and medical professionals:¹

- FASD with Sentinel Facial Features,
- FASD without Sentinel Facial Features and At-Risk



If you have a child with a diagnosis, ensure that it is being used among all professionals and agencies providing support and if you suspect a diagnosis of FASD, see the steps below to learn how to get started, and learn what the process involves.

The idea of seeking out a diagnosis can be intimidating. It can be helpful to understand the steps to getting help, and what you can expect during this journey:

- 1** If you think you, or someone you care for, may have FASD, you can start the process of learning for yourself. This can begin with asking for resources and information for referral from other professionals you may be working with, and sometimes from your family doctor or pediatrician.
- 2** The wait before being seen can seem long, because the assessment team will need to gather a lot of information, like school or medical records, and history from pregnancy if there are any. The Clinic Coordinator you meet with will be able to inform you of their processes and how long it can take.
- 3** Diagnosis is made by a team and may require several visits to the clinic to see doctors, nurses, counsellors, and specialists. It may feel like you have a lot of people involved. This can feel very overwhelming, and hard to manage a lot of appointments.
- 4** If a diagnosis of FASD is made, there is usually a meeting with you and your supports at the clinic to talk about findings and recommendations. Many people feel a sense of relief to have this made clear, however it can also be a lot to think about.
- 5** The clinic will also prepare a report that will detail specific findings, as well as a list of strategies to ensure the greatest success across the lifespan. It can be a very important time to have support.
- 6** When you suspect FASD for yourself or someone you care for, you may already be feeling stress of trying to cope. Whether assessed or not, there are resources that you can connect with while you wait for your clinic appointments.
- 7** The information you receive in the report can be technical and hard to understand. There are resources available to help you put the recommendations into action by talking about strategies, and other areas where you may need specific accommodations made.



It can sometimes be helpful to talk with other people who understand the challenges you may be facing. At ConnectFASD, we are here to listen, and offer resources, at any phase of your journey.



Resources in your area:

ALBERTA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Provides assessment and diagnostic services to children, youth up to age 18, accessible through a medical referral.

ENVIROS

Enviros Neurodevelopmental Assessment and Diagnostic Centre (NDC) - The Enviros NDC features a multidisciplinary team of highly-esteemed experts that deliver FASD assessment and diagnosis services to clients across their life span (children, youth & adults). NDC provides a comprehensive assessment report that details strength-based strategies and recommendations tailored to the client's individual needs for the purpose of focused supports and interventions.

FASD Support Program - Provides foster, adoptive, kinship and biological parents with the information and tools they need to effectively parent a child or youth with FASD.

FASD Evolution Program - Supports adults living with a diagnosis of FASD through access to income support, housing, employment and medical care.

FOOTHILLS FETAL ALCOHOL SOCIETY

Foothills Fetal Alcohol Society - Provides assessment and diagnostic services to children, youth and adults.

FASD Family Response Program - Supports caregivers living with someone with FASD through in-home visitation, advocacy, access of diagnosis and assessment services, and transition supports in the rural surrounding areas of Calgary. Hosts a variety of parent support groups.

Siksika Health Services - Provides an early intervention program, home visits, a monthly support group, and a day program to provide support for individuals and families impacted by FASD. They also provide FASD education and information sessions for the local community, caregivers and professionals. Siksika Health also offers assessment and diagnostic clinics for residents of the Siksika Nation



Talk to us at ConnectFASD for more information about referral processes.
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FOR FURTHER READING:

1. Jocelynn L. Cook, Courtney R. Green, Christine M. Lilley, Sally M. Anderson, Mary Ellen Baldwin, Albert E. Chudley, Julianne L. Conry, Nicole LeBlanc, Christine A. Looch, Jan Lutke, Bernadene F. Mallon, Audrey A. McFarlane, Valerie K. Temple, Ted Rosales CMAJ Feb 2016, 188 (3) 191-197; DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.141593
2. Calgary Fetal Alcohol Network. (2016). Best & Emerging Practices for Individuals and Families affected by FASD throughout the Lifespan. Best & Emerging Practices for Individuals and Families affected by FASD throughout the Lifespan (squarespace.com)
3. Thanh NX, Jonsson E. Costs of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in the Canadian Criminal Justice System. J Popul Ther Clin Pharmacol. 2015;22(1):e125-31. Epub 2015 Jun 1. PMID: 26072470.