

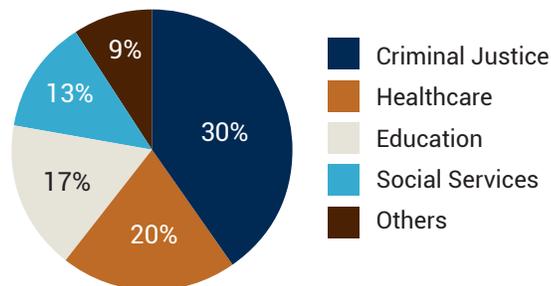
FASD and the Education System

The annual cost of Fetal Alcohol spectrum disorder is \$9.7 billion in Canada with the education accounting for about 17% (1.7 billion dollars)⁴.

With this in mind, it is vital to build in supports and strategies for children and youth with FASD, but also for the teachers and other children who share the classroom, to ensure everyone's learning needs are met.

One of the barriers to learning is that most children with FASD do not have a diagnosis, therefore their support systems do not have the right strategies to help them to reach their best potential.

A diagnosis gives children with FASD, their families, and professionals the information needed to understand their unique strengths and challenges, to better create a fulfilling learning environment. An assessment at an earlier age will provide early learning tools, preferable to individuals receiving an assessment in adolescent and adult years, where they may be at higher risk of secondary challenges, causing some of the costs in the other sectors.



What do behaviours look like in the classroom, without and Assessment/ Diagnosis or supports:^{1,2}

You observe: Children may appear defiant or noncompliant when they experience frustration from not understanding the expectations.

Try to remember: Challenges in ALARMERS (memory, executive function, and regulation)



You observe: A child may seem not to learn from consequences and repeat undesirable actions and behaviors without making links to earlier experiences.

Try to remember: Ongoing challenges with same behavior are a sign of a learning barrier.



You observe: A child may not complete homework on time or at all, due to poor memory, or not understanding the task.

Try to remember: They may not have a concept of time to meet a due date.

You observe: A child may be easily distracted and cannot sit still without repetition.

Try to remember: This can be due to sensory overload or underlying ADHD. Things like noises, lighting, and smells in the classroom may create distraction.



You observe: Storytelling or speaking off topic.

Try to remember: It may look like they are lying but they are in actuality filling in gaps that they have within their memory, unintentionally. Or they may not understand what is being asked of them and try to answer in order to please. Be aware that a consequence here may have the opposite effect, creating trust issues. The child is responding from a barrier in thinking, not being intentionally difficult.



You observe: A child or youth may not understand ownership or possession, taking things that do not belong to them impulsively, then not returning them out of shame.

Try to remember: This may appear to be stealing, but keep in mind that ownership may be an abstract idea to them in the moment they take an item, even if they appear to understand it when you explain.

Things to try to build learning strategies:^{1,3}

1. Visual cues and concepts
 - Show the time of activity change rather than saying it
2. Role model (appropriate behavior, activities, assignments, confabulation)
3. Use simple language
 - Ask them to say it in their own words
4. Say what they CAN do, rather than what they CAN'T do
 - Give them a chance to choose from two options
5. Make sure you have their attention before speaking (eye-contact)
6. Be aware of sensory challenges
 - What can you see, feel, smell, hear and ensure there are strategies in place for a successful environment
7. Give a break (fidget toys, stretching, walking in place)
8. Label items they can USE and cover anything they CANNOT use
 - Label items with green sticker that they can use and anything without a sticker they must ask permission
9. Allow time for processing - BE PATIENT
10. Repeat, consistency, and structure for all strategies

Resources in your area:

CALGARY ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

Calgary Alternative Poss-Abilities - Provides case management assistance to enable individuals with FASD and other diagnoses with complex support requirements to live and participate in the community and develop vital service and interpersonal connections.

ENVIROS

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

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.

FASD MAPS is a partnership program with Renfrew Educational Services, Hull Services, McMan Calgary and Woods Homes. The partnership offers a continuum of services for families with children and youth affected by FASD.

Renfrew Education Services works with children, newborn to 10 years who may be affected by FASD, and their families

Hull Services works with children and youth, 8 to 15 who may be impacted by FASD

McMan Youth, Family and Community Services works with youth and young adults, ages 15-21 who may be affected by FASD

Wood's Homes supports parents and caregivers of children, all ages, who may be affected by FASD

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.
connectfasd.ca • 1 866 601 3273 (FASD) • info@connectfasd.ca

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. 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 \(squarespace.com\)](http://squarespace.com)
2. Duke University. (2016). Overview of FASD Student and Behavioral Issues. [Chapter 6: The FASD Student & Behavioral Issues – Understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders \(FASD\) \(duke.edu\)](http://duke.edu)
3. Healthy Child Manitoba and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2009). What educators need to know about FASD. [fasdeducators_en.pdf \(vitalitenb.ca\)](http://vitalitenb.ca)
4. 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.