

Professionals Working with FASD

When you work with FASD, it can help to understand some of the hurdles people with FASD face. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder barriers can be split into two categories:

Primary Challenges

means things that result from Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (PAE), like:

- Learning or memory issues
- Trouble managing emotions
- Physical conditions
- Impulsiveness
- Trouble understanding rules or instructions
- Feeling overwhelmed

Secondary Challenges

means things that result from going through life without supports, strategies and resources for FASD, like:

- Not getting the most out of school
- Having a hard time feeling understood in relationships
- Challenges meeting expectations in work
- Trouble keeping stable housing
- Legal concerns



Having a strategy to work with FASD has been shown to increase program effectiveness¹. When you work with people who have FASD, who may or may not be diagnosed, it helps to remember the word **A.L.A.R.M.E.R.S.**² for creating a strategy.

- A** **Attention:** A person may have trouble with focus or may have a diagnosis of ADHD.
Strategy – use visual aids or frequent reminders
- L** **Language:** The person may have a hard time if you use complicated or abstract words.
Strategy – Use concrete language with clear meanings
- A** **Adaptive Behaviors:** A person may have challenges with managing money, time, shopping, cleaning, and life skills. *Strategy* – model the tasks with repetition and use tools like phone apps to create a plan.
- R** **Reasoning:** The person may have a hard time understanding cause and effect or predicting consequences to actions. *Strategy* – use a support network of people who can be trusted for good advice.
- m** **Memory:** Individual may be forgetful or have trouble remembering things.
Strategy – be consistent and use tools to help remind them. Be patient. This may take a lot of repeating.
- E** **Executive Functioning:** This means they may have challenges in planning, flexible thinking, applying ideas they learn to problem solving, switching tasks³. *Strategy* – Simplify instructions. Stay focused on one item at a time.
- R** **Regulation:** A person may show challenges in managing body functions like temperature, sleep, and appetite.
Strategy – daily prompts can be good reminders to take care of themselves.
- S** **Sensory Issues:** A person may have reactions to sensory things like touch, taste, hear and smell.
Strategy – build a routine of activities that include using the 5 senses interactively.

Although FASD is a learning disability, every person is unique in their neurodiversity; some areas of life may be going well, but that does not always mean all areas are. This can change as often as daily or weekly.⁴

Learning can also be affected by feeling tired, poor eating, distractions, and having a support system.⁵ “It is important to remember the individual and their needs, challenges, and strengths, when providing support and services”⁶.



Talk to us at ConnectFASD for more information about our support programs and services.

connectfasd.ca

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FOR FURTHER READING:

1. Brown, N., Gudjonsson, G., & Connor, P. (2011). Suggestibility and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: I'll tell you anything you want to hear. *Journal of Psychiatry & Law*, 39)
2. *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD and Justice)*. (2021). *Effects of FASD*. [Effects of FASD - FASDJustice CA](https://fasdjustice.ca).
3. *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD and Justice)*. (2021). *Recognizing FASD*. [Recognizing FASD - FASDJustice CA](https://fasdjustice.ca)).
4. Pei, J. and Leung, S. (2016). Experiences in the Canadian criminal justice system for individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: Double jeopardy? *CJCCJ/RCCJP*
5. Stewart, M and Glowatski, K. (2014). Front-line police perceptions of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in a Canadian province. *Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*, 87, 17-28 (<https://fasdjustice.ca/investigation/charter-of-rights-and-freedoms-s-10b.html>)
6. 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