



**Recognize.**

**Evaluate.**

**Treat.**



**Not Incarcerate.**



**Individuals afflicted  
with Fetal Alcohol  
Spectrum Disorder  
Need Your Help**



## Be an Advocate.

### Educating the Criminal-Justice System

Children born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, including fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and fetal alcohol effect (FAE), are brain damaged and over-represented in our criminal system – a system they are less able to navigate. Their behavioral problems and susceptibility to suggestion often leads to their confessing to a crime they did not commit, as well as to committing crimes for no apparent reason. What’s more, alternative treatment methods are needed to change their behavior – not incarceration. Consider that:

- *Individuals with FASD are likely to break the law at some point in their lives.* Highly susceptible to peer pressure, they often act on impulse and have poor judgment. They do not learn from their mistakes and fail to understand the consequences of their actions. A recent landmark study of young people with FASD revealed that 60% had trouble with the law – with shoplifting and theft the most common transgressions. In addition, 50% of the group had been confined in mental health facilities, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, or jail.\*
- *FASD is often misdiagnosed in the justice system.* Adolescents with FASD are typically categorized as

having Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Conduct Disorder. Yet, juvenile justice experts believe that as many as 1/4 of the young people in the court system have been prenatally exposed to alcohol.\*

- *Individuals with FASD do not understand or respond to the justice system as a developmentally normal person would.* They often only pretend to fully understand the charges filed and the plea and sentence process. What’s more, he or she may not fully remember the important details of the crime that, in turn, may be important to reach a just verdict. They also may not understand the concepts of criminal intent or remorse.\*
- *FASD individuals do not respond to incarceration.* They do not understand what they did was wrong and why they are being punished. Since they do not understand the consequences of their actions, they will not change their behavior after being sentenced to jail or a detention home. Alternative methods of treatment and behavior modification are required. A concerted effort is needed to educate legal professionals about effective methods of behavior change.\*

(\*info provided by Natl. Organization on FASD)

***“FASD adolescents can be successful in life, but they have special needs. We need a justice system and a caring community that knows that.”***

Ann Streissguth, University of Washington  
Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

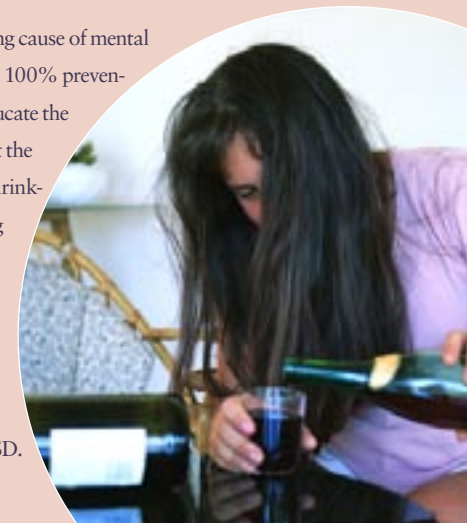
### Secondary Disabilities associated with FAS/FAE

- Trouble in school including suspensions and dropping out.
- Trouble at home including impaired socialization and communication skills
- Trouble with the law
- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Joblessness
- Homelessness
- Mental problems
- Victimization
- Irresponsible parenting

## What you can do.

- Learn more about FASD (See Resources on Back)
- Determine whether the mother drank or used drugs while pregnant, and if so, ask for a further diagnosis
- Learn the symptoms, physical and behavioral clues and how these may translate into odd or bad behavior, and know who to refer the FAS/FAE individual to so they can be evaluated and helped
- Learn how our correctional and criminal justice system is affected by FASD
- Ask for training for your departments
- Ask for and read all reports from social workers, mental health workers, alcohol & drug counselors
- If you are a dependency or delinquent court judge, ask that relevant information be presented by the caretakers, social workers, probation and correction officers, and attorneys in regard to FASD; follow up when warranted with a formal evaluation.

FASD is the leading cause of mental retardation that is 100% preventable. Help us educate the community about the consequences of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, and learn how you can become an advocate for the many individuals afflicted with FASD.



# FASD Resources

## National Organizations

**NOFAS** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating alcohol-related birth defects and improving the quality of life for individuals with FASD and their families. NOFAS takes a multicultural approach to prevention and healing and is committed to raising awareness and implementing innovative ideas in prevention, intervention, education, and advocacy in communities throughout the Nation. [www.nofas.org](http://www.nofas.org)

**The SAMHSA Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Center for Excellence** website provides information and resources about FASD. The FASD Center is a Federal initiative devoted to preventing and treating FASD. We also provide materials for raising awareness about FASD. [www.fascenter.samhsa.gov](http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov)

**The National Task Force on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect** is hosted by CDC. [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/taskforce.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/taskforce.htm)

**The University of Washington Fetal Alcohol and Drug Unit** at <http://depts.washington.edu/fadu/>

## Local Agencies

**[www.php.com](http://www.php.com)**

Parents Helping Parents

Meeting children's special needs through Parents Helping Parents. 408.727.5775.

**[www.sbi.org](http://www.sbi.org)**

Severe Brain Injury

**[www.via.com](http://www.via.com)**

VIA Rehabilitation

Information Provided by  
Santa Clara County FASD Task Force  
1-800-310-2332; [FASDtaskforce@yahoo.com](mailto:FASDtaskforce@yahoo.com)

For more information about becoming an advocate for FASD individuals, visit [www.catalystforyouth.org](http://www.catalystforyouth.org)  
This publication was made possible from a grant by March of Dimes and Catalyst for Youth, Inc. a non profit public charity and educational organization helping at risk teens and young adults become responsible, contributing members of society.