

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

## What You Need to Know when Adopting or Fostering in Colorado

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or FASD, is an umbrella term describing the lifelong range of effects that can occur when an individual is prenatally exposed to alcohol. Those with FASD will need a lifetime of support. When FASD is misunderstood, undiagnosed or misdiagnosed at the primary level, the individual can suffer from feelings of frustration and failure leading to secondary and tertiary behavioral symptoms. As time persists, tertiary symptoms often appear when primary and secondary symptoms go unsupported or accommodated.



Each person with an FASD has their own unique combination of signs and symptoms. These symptoms fall into four main categories and are caused by permanent, organic brain damage. There is hope through continued support and resilient coping strategies.



Mental



Physical



Learning



Behavioral



FASD is frequently referred to as a “hidden disability”, and is often misunderstood by family members, caregivers, educators, clinicians, service providers, and the juvenile justice system. It is also not uncommon that persons with FASD are perceived as disruptive, uncooperative and behaviorally challenging rather than dysregulated and in need of additional guidance.

## How is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnosed?



If you suspect FASD, bring up this concern with your PCP or Pediatrician. Diagnosis by a professional will include a comprehensive evaluation typically including an assessment of executive functioning, adaptive abilities, IQ testing, and a physical exam. The diagnostic team may consist of a developmental pediatrician, a psychologist, a neuropsychologist, or a psychiatrist. [Contact Illuminate Colorado \(link below\) for a list of providers in Colorado that can diagnosis FASD.](#)



### What to look for prior to seeking diagnosis

- Difficulty applying knowledge to a new situation
- Difficulty connecting their actions with consequences
- Poor reasoning and judgment skills
- Difficulty regulating emotions (emotional outbursts)
- Developmental Delay
- Difficulty with planning and organizing

## Must Have Resources

### National

#### FASD United

<https://fasdunited.org>

#### American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders/>

#### FASD Collaborative Project

<https://www.fasdcollaborative.com>

#### Proof Alliance

<https://www.proofalliance.org>

#### FASD Consultation, Education and Training Service

<https://fascets.org>

### State

#### Colorado Department of Education

[https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/fasd\\_resources](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/fasd_resources)

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/FASD>

#### Illuminate Colorado

<https://illuminatecolorado.org/fasdsupport/>

#### Colorado Office of Children, Youth & Families, Division of Child Welfare

<https://coloradocwts.com/foster-parents/>

#### Training System

<https://coloradocwts.com>

# Treatment and Success

“Although there is no “cure” for the brain damage induced by prenatal alcohol...exposure, we can indeed influence a child’s life for the better by redirecting him into a regulated, smooth and mutually interactive dance with the people that matter most in his life.” (Chasnoff 2011)



- Developmental services
- Educational interventions
- Behavior modification
- Parent training
- Social skills training
- Medications and other medical therapies
- Transition planning
- Advocacy in school and the workplace
- Referral for community support services
- Coordination across the specialists, partners, and needed supports
- Primary care in a high-quality medical home setting with care integration

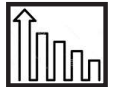


## Keys to success

- Early and comprehensive diagnosis
- Early Intervention
- Strong social networks & Support Groups
- Strength-based accommodations
- Occupation, Physical and Speech therapy
- Mental health care
- Family focused intervention
- Special education and training services
- Positive behavior supports
- Let needs and support evolve with the person
- Coordinated treatment approaches
- Modify environments and activities

## There is a Higher Number of Prenatally Exposed Children in Foster Care

### How do families prepare?



- Find a developmental pediatrician or an FASD informed medical provider; ideally, someone who is familiar with adoption, developmental and behavioral intervention.
- Share this information with your child’s providers to receive more appropriate medical and mental health services.
- Contact your county’s human services or social services office about available trainings, services, and supports.

### Support Groups

- Not only are other parents a source of strength, but together, you can find solutions, promote learning, and increase awareness.
- Many disabilities have common challenges, so don’t stick to just FASD groups!



- Give yourself credit for all that you are doing, and acknowledge the presence of strong emotions and that grief that you may feel
- FASD is usually a result of misinformation, lack of knowledge, unplanned pregnancy, or alcohol use disorder. No person goes into their pregnancy willfully intending to harm their child.
- Parenting through FASD behaviors can be hard work. Being the best parent you can be requires focused efforts on your own self-care.



### Advocacy

- Teach your child to advocate on their own behalf.
- Help your child understand what FASD is, and how the child might explain FASD to others.
- Our FASD advocacy is their lifeline!

