

Information for Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers about the Teen and Adult Stream of the FASD Conference

The teen and adult program, which contains educational and social activities, runs over three days, and is planned, organized, and run by FASD United and the Adult Leadership Committee FASD Changemakers. *It takes place in its own rooms, separate from the main conference but in the same hotel.* It is open **ONLY** to teens and adults who have FASD or believe they do. It is NOT open to other family members. This is meant to be a safe place for teens and adults to learn about FASD from those with FASD who have become mentors and leaders and who have overcome many difficulties but who still struggle daily with different things – those who understand and know the struggles those attending with FASD are experiencing. It is a place where they can meet others like themselves, talk about things, ask questions, learn a thing or two, and experience belonging.

This conference is very well known for its topic-specific mini-keynotes delivered by different teens and adults with FASD before every plenary session in the main conference and its closing ceremonies which allow all participants with FASD who wish to do so to participate. These mini-keynotes and closing ceremonies are also planned, developed, organized, and run by the Adult Leadership Committee of FASD Change Makers with the help of other adults with FASD.

Registration cost for the teen and adult program, as well as the rest of the main conference, is free for individuals with FASD. FASD United covers these costs. If they wish to do so, individuals with FASD are also welcome to attend any session they want to during the main conference and may leave those sessions at any time they wish to do so. The option is theirs; they can attend either conference or move between both. They are also welcome to sit where they want in the main forum, but there will be some reserved tables at the back of the main ballroom room during plenary sessions of the main conference.

If you would like further information or have questions, please get in touch with the Adult Leadership Committee at FASDChangemakers@gmail.com.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- While there is no adult program on Wednesday, the pre-conference day, there will be an opportunity that day for you or your teen/adult to meet the ALC during the coffee breaks, ask questions, or voice any concerns
- The conference for teens and adults starts on Thursday morning and ends Saturday afternoon after the closing ceremonies
- The ALC hosts a “get to meet each other” luncheon on Thursday for all teens and adults attending
- This is an inclusive experience for those with FASD and involves individuals from ages 13 through adulthood and across the spectrum of ability
- This is a positive experience for teens and adults who attend, and it provides them with a sense of connection and understanding and leaves them with a sense of success and hope for the future
- Positive peer-to-peer support often naturally develops

- This is also a new environment that can be intimidating for people with FASDs, and it may take someone a little time to get used to it
- A quiet room is provided for the teen and adult conference stream
- There are many people at the conference and the teen and adult stream, so it can be overwhelming for those who have not attended before – have a backup plan if needed
- Because of the “busyness” of the conference, your teen or adult might be emotional at the end of the day: you are their “safe” person
- It can be very tiring, so planning for how to deal with that is important
- No one must attend any session they do not wish to, so please have a plan, if required, for what your teen or adult will do in that case while you are at the main conference
- The closing ceremonies allow the involvement of every teen or adult who wishes to participate (there are different roles and things they can do; no one needs a “skill”); a rehearsal is held on Friday evening after a pizza dinner
- Friendships often develop at the conference and continue after people return home. Please be aware of these, know who and where they are, and get the contact information
- Have someone your teen or adult can talk to (someone they trust/work with) *after* the conference ends – processing what they have experienced will come in waves.
- Teens and adults often feel a lot of sadness after the conference when traveling home or once at home. This may have been the first place/time they have felt understood, accepted, and included by peers; they may also exhibit behaviors or actions because of this and its loss.
- Your teen or adult may develop new or more confidence as they begin to see themselves as a more functional human being and reflected in everyone else at the conference.
- The emotional roller coaster can last for some time.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THESE LIMITATIONS:

- While the ALC will be available throughout the teen and adult stream during conference hours to your teen/adult to talk and sort through emotions and situations that may occur, they are *not* responsible for those with FASD who attend or choose to leave a session and are *not* “babysitters”; they are actively leading the program.
- Those with FASD must be responsible for their actions; they can leave a session if they want to
- Once the conference ends for the day, there is no supervision provided by the ALC or conference staff.



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