



August 3, 2023

Elijah Wolfson  
Editorial Director, Health, Science, and Climate  
TIME  
1095 Sixth Avenue  
New York, New York 10036

Subject: The term “FASD” should be used when talking about people affected by prenatal alcohol exposure

To Editor Wolfson,

As the leading organization dedicated to empowering people living with FASD and prenatal substance exposure, FASD United appreciates the good intentions behind Oliver Staley’s recent article “[What Prohibition Can Teach Us About Drug and Alcohol Policy Today](#)” to inform your readers of the history of public health policy around alcohol and in particular its effects on prenatal alcohol exposure.

We would like to respectfully point out that the article’s usage of the term “fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)” to refer to “a wide range of symptoms” is incorrect and the term FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorders) should be used in its place.

Given that [FASD is the umbrella term](#) describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was exposed to alcohol during pregnancy, FASD is the appropriate and accurate term to use in the context of your article. FASD affects each person in different ways. In addition to the effects mentioned in your article, FASD often affects executive functioning and adaptive skills, including behavior, memory, and socialization.

While many people are still more familiar with the term “fetal alcohol syndrome” due to its earlier usage going back to the 1970s, it is a diagnostic term specific to the subset of individuals that have particular physical facial features that we now know comprise [a relatively small segment of the much larger group of people living with FASD](#).

While we appreciate the article’s mention of the high rate of fetal alcohol syndrome, an even more important and relevant statistic is that up to 1 in 20 school-age children live with FASD, [according to experts cited by the CDC](#).

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Despite its high prevalence, FASD is vastly under-recognized. It is important for major media outlets such as TIME to do their part to expand the public's awareness of the scope of FASD. A crucial piece of this effort is to consistently use the correct language when writing about the issue. Importantly, the community of people that live with this disability themselves largely identify with the term FASD, underscoring the need for achieving widespread familiarity and usage of this term.

We ask that the editors of TIME make every effort to ensure that future articles that reference the very important topic of alcohol exposure during pregnancy use the correct language and terminology so that we can all move closer to our vision of an FASD-informed world where people living with FASD and prenatal substance exposure are recognized and supported.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Wisdahl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "J." and the last name "Wisdahl" clearly legible.

Jennifer Wisdahl  
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