



# FASD: Substance Use and Recovery

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) are a group of diagnosable medical conditions that can occur in a person who was exposed to alcohol before birth. Effects are lifelong and can include mental health conditions, learning disabilities, sensory issues, and physical manifestations such as heart defects, hearing and visual impairments, and more.

*Give FASD a Seat at the Table*



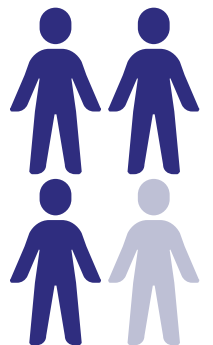
## What is substance use?

- Substance use refers to the use of selected substances, including alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs with possible dependence and other harmful effects. <sup>2</sup>
- Substance misuse is the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and/or prescribed medications in ways that can cause harm to the individual and those around them. Not everyone that misuses substances has a substance use disorder, <sup>3</sup> but some do. <sup>4</sup>
- A substance use disorder (SUD) is a treatable mental disorder that affects a person's brain and behavior, leading to their inability to control their use of substances like legal or illegal drugs, alcohol, or medications. <sup>5</sup>



Studies suggest that more than one third of people with FASD have had problems with substance use, with more than half of them requiring inpatient treatment.

**Nearly 3 out of 4 people (72%) recover from addiction.**



# What support options are available for people living with FASD who use substances?

There are many different types of support available, including inpatient and outpatient treatment, therapy, and more. Sometimes, traditional treatment options aren't as effective for people with an FASD.<sup>7</sup> Providers can make meaningful accommodations to better support people with FASD.<sup>8</sup>

- **Occupational Therapy**
- **Community-Based Group Therapy**
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**



*"As a birth mother in recovery, the culture around drinking is one of acceptance. I think there is significant fear around giving a voice to this diagnosis. Rest assured, it is not meant to be a judgment on your life choices, but drinking during pregnancy has consequences not just for you but for your unborn child."*

–Angela  
(Birth mom in recovery)

## Professionals Can Help!

**There are accommodations and supports that can result in better outcomes for people with an FASD. General recommendations include:**

- using concrete language
- offering a structured environment
- promote calming techniques to help with self-regulation
- provide trauma-informed, culturally-relevant services.

**Providing FASD-informed care makes a difference and can improve outcomes.**



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