

Talking About FASD: Best Practices

Recommendations & Considerations



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. How we talk about FASD matters. It impacts the way people think, act, and feel and can be a tool for creating a more FASD-informed world. How individuals and society as a whole communicate about FASD impacts attitudes and behaviors toward individuals and the field of FASD in general. Here are some strategies that anyone can use to improve their communication about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders:

Try saying this:

instead of this:

✓ Person with an FASD	FASD kid, suffering from FASD
✓ Neurotypical	Normal
✓ Possible FASD	Suspected FASD
✓ Prevent prenatal alcohol exposure	Prevent FASD
✓ On the FASD spectrum	FAS, partial FAS

Keep in mind:

- FASD is a complex public health issue that impacts communities across geographical locations, racial and cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic status. An estimated 1 in 20 Americans has an FASD.
- Avoid victimization and stereotyping. Focus on strengths.
- Inclusive language is important to reduce guilt, shame, and misunderstandings.

Talking About FASD: Best Practices

Recommendations & Considerations



It is important to use non-judgmental language when discussing families. Using inclusive language can reduce incorrect and sometimes harmful assumptions about identities and behaviors. By using positive language, the same information can be conveyed in a way that uplifts and affirms families.

Try saying this:

instead of this:

✓ FASD affects 1 in 20.

FASD epidemic

✓ Person with an alcohol use disorder

Alcoholic or addict

✓ In recovery, not drinking

Clean

✓ Substance use

Substance abuse

✓ Confirmed PAE

Admitted to drinking

✓ FASD can occur when a pregnancy is exposed to alcohol.

FASD is caused by a woman drinking during pregnancy.

✓ No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy.

Don't drink during pregnancy.