



What Social Workers Should Know About FASD

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) are a group of diagnosable medical conditions that 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.¹ Through a combination of identification, education, and direct support, **social workers provide a lifeline to those navigating the complexities of FASD.**

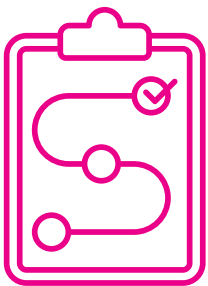


It is estimated that as many as **1 in 20** Americans has an FASD.²

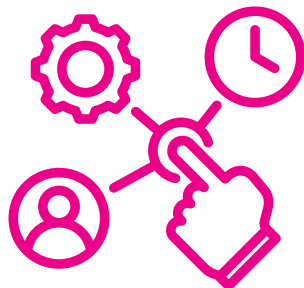
“Given the prevalence of FASD and its far-reaching impact across the lifespan, social workers across the spectrum of health, education, child welfare, and criminal justice settings have a role to play in the identification, referral, and delivery of services to individuals and families affected by FASD.”³

-National Association of Social Workers [NASW]

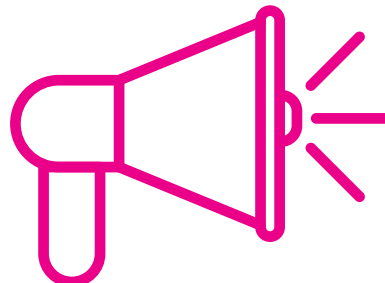
Families impacted by FASD often have high levels of stress, which can be compounded by misunderstanding, lack of general awareness of FASD, and the use of interventions and supports that are widely accepted for therapeutic use but are ineffective for people with FASD.^{4,5} Social workers can support families and individuals affected by FASD through various strategies, such as:⁶



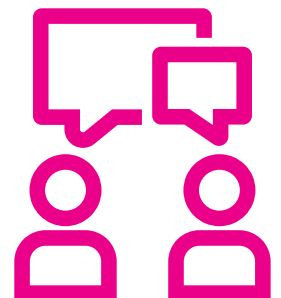
personalized
support plans



resource
navigation



advocacy



education &
awareness

FASD-specific strategies for social workers:

Personalized Support Plans



Create FASD-informed, individualized support plans that align with the person's developmental stage, build on strengths, and address whole-body needs. Incorporate concrete, structured strategies for education, proactive regulation and behavior supports, and scaffolded life skills development across environments.

Resource Navigation



Assist families in accessing and navigating FASD-informed, multidisciplinary services by providing warm handoffs, simplifying complex systems, and prioritizing providers trained in brain-based approaches. Coordinate care to ensure consistency, reduce overwhelm, and align supports with the individual's functional needs and developmental stage.

Advocacy



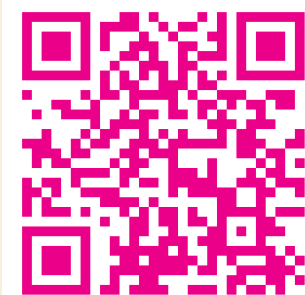
Translate needs into clear, functional language, educate systems on brain-based differences (shifting from "won't" to "can't, yet"), and guide navigation of education, healthcare, and other systems to ensure that appropriate accommodations, environmental supports, and consistent, FASD-informed strategies are implemented across settings.

Education & Awareness



Learn from and share accurate, nonjudgmental information. Emphasize FASD as a lifelong, whole-body diagnosis that can impact development. Work to ensure that individuals are supported with compassion, appropriate expectations, and consistent, strengths-based strategies across systems.

Connect with the Family Navigator program for information and support



Sources:

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