



ABOUT US

Telethon Kids Institute is working with Mercy Services and the Newcastle Local Drug Action Team to help make FASD History in Newcastle. If you'd like to know more about the project:

Email:

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Online:

<https://alcoholpregnancy.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-projects/making-fasd-history-multi-sites/>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Telethon Kids Institute, FASD & Justice Professional Development Videos:

<https://alcoholpregnancy.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/fasd-justice/professional-development/>

Telethon Kids Institute:

<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-topics/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd>

NOFASD Australia:

<https://www.nofasd.org.au/>

FASD Hub Australia:

<https://www.fasdhub.org.au>

FASD in the Justice system



FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is caused by drinking alcohol during pregnancy. It can affect the development of a baby's brain and body in different ways.

Drinking during pregnancy can cause difficulties with:

-  growth
-  learning
-  memory
-  communication
-  behaviour

WHAT MIGHT FASD LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

The young person may:

- Admit to crimes they did not commit.
- Not understand that some behaviours are wrong.
- Say they understand their legal rights when they do not.
- Make a potentially incriminating statement.
- Panic during encounters with police by running away or resisting arrest.



In the context of an offence young people with FASD may:

- Act inappropriately when touched due to sensory issues.
- Become aggressive due to sensory overload from noise, lights, and activity.
- Respond inappropriately to what is being asked of them.
- Be unable to organise their thoughts, process information, or understand cause and effect.

In court processes these challenges can:

- Lead to custody or bail being refused.
- Lead to young people saying they understand or agree to the conditions to please others.
- Cause difficulties following through with tasks or orders.
- Come across as "lacking empathy".

Simple strategies to support young people with FASD

- Seek to understand their behaviour.
- Use simple language.
- Give clear instructions.
- Provide lots of reminders for appointments and rules/expectations.

What behaviour may look like	What behaviour actually represents
Non-compliance with order	➤ May not understand or remember what is expected.
Repeatedly making the same mistake	➤ May not link cause and effect. ➤ May not understand or remember.
Not sitting still	➤ Sensory overload.
Poor social judgement	➤ Difficulties interpreting social cues and understanding social conventions.
Overly physical	➤ May not understand social cues about boundaries. ➤ Hyper or hypo sensitive to touch.
Does not work independently	➤ May not translate verbal instructions into actions. ➤ May have problems with memory.
Stealing	➤ Does not understand concept of ownership.
Lying	➤ May not link cause and effect. ➤ Difficulties accurately recalling events.
Self - centred	➤ May not link cause and effect.
Volatile	➤ Difficulties verbalising feelings. ➤ Feeling overwhelmed or over-stimulated.
Inconsistent performance	➤ Difficulties with memory. ➤ Difficulties carrying through learning from one situation to the next.