



Alcohol and Pregnancy & FASD Research Team



PREVENTION



DIAGNOSIS



THERAPY & MANAGEMENT

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Understanding FASD: A guide for justice professionals

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is characterised by brain damage from prenatal alcohol exposure, the effects are lifelong and may not be seen at birth.

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What was this research about?

Our previous research identified what justice professionals knew about FASD, how this impacted on their work, what information they required and how this information should be delivered.

This project focussed on translating this research into educational resources for justice professionals so that they can:

- recognise cognitive impairments and possible FASD in young people engaging with the criminal justice system whether as an offender, witness or victim, and children and young people in protection and care matters
- identify legal implications
- consider referral for assessment if the disability is suspected
- consider decision making with respect to orders, sentencing and management

What did we do?

In collaboration with justice professionals we developed:

On-line Continuing Professional Development (CPD) module for WA lawyers. This module is available from the Legal Aid WA Track-N-Train website or contact [Legal Aid WA](#) or phone 08 9261 6384.

6 short videos



Overview: FASD and issues in the justice system



FASD and the justice system



Awareness of FASD



Representing clients in the criminal justice system



FASD and the Judiciary



Protection and care proceedings

[Watch the videos](#)

Updated FASD information to the Department of the Attorney General for inclusion in Chapter 4 'People with disabilities' in the **Equality before the Law Bench Book**.

Presentations at international and national conferences, and training at seminars and workshops on FASD and justice issues.

FASD and Justice page on our Alcohol Pregnancy & FASD website. This page provides a general overview of FASD and seven sub-sites. Each sub-site provides useful Australian and international information, data and links, which are updated on a regular basis. [Read more](#)

Project publication in Journal of Therapeutic Clinical Pharmacology in March 2016
[Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: Using knowledge, attitudes and practice of justice professionals to support their educational needs.](#)

Who took part in this research?

- Researchers
- Steering Group (magistrate, lawyers and representatives from non-government organisations and the community)
- Stakeholders (judicial officers, lawyers, Government departments and non-government organisations)

[Read more](#)

How did consumers and the community participate in this research?

A community representative was a member of the Steering Group and we received feedback from the FASD and Justice Community Reference Group.

How will this research help?

The resources will help justice professionals better understand FASD and the implications for young people coming before the courts and that this will lead to:

- better understanding of FASD by lawyers representing young people involved in the criminal justice system
- better understanding by case workers, lawyers and others of the impairments that may be suffered by a parent or child in the protection and care jurisdiction
- advocacy that reflects a greater appreciation of any impairments that the young person, or a parent, may suffer, and the need for investigation, if appropriate, before finalising the matter
- evidence of impairment/s being adduced in Courts, thus enabling decision-making which better reflects the objectives of relevant legislation
- improved understanding by service providers of FASD, the development of alternative and successful strategies to work with a young person with a FASD
- the development of appropriate services and programs to provide support, therapy and appropriate intervention for a child and/or parents with a FASD involved in protection and care proceedings

This project was funded through a Criminal Property Confiscation Grant (WA Department of the Attorney General)

Alcohol and Pregnancy & FASD Research Team at Telethon Kids Institute

We have a comprehensive program of research in partnership with community & stakeholders to achieve our goals of developing prevention strategies; building the capacity of health, justice and other professionals to recognise and diagnose FASD; and implementing and evaluating programs for children and young people with FASD and their families.

For information on alcohol & pregnancy, FASD, our research projects, resources and publications visit our website: www.alcoholpregnancy.telethonkids.org.au

There is no safe time or amount of alcohol to drink while planning a pregnancy, when pregnant and when breastfeeding which is why the Australian Guidelines state 'not drinking alcohol is the safest choice'.

