

FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

The Correct Language To Use For FASD – Part 3



FASD in General (continuation)

Please use:	Instead of:	Why?
Secondary challenges/effects/risks	Secondary disabilities	‘Secondary disabilities’ was created in the US several decades ago to describe the adverse life experiences that were documented to occur in individuals with FASD at a disproportionate rate (mental health issues, addictions, criminality, unemployment, poor school engagement etc.). New science suggests that mental health concerns and addictions may be a primary part of FASD, but challenges that are not biologically driven (e.g. homelessness) should not be termed a disability, nor are they specific to FASD. Concerns like dropping out of school and criminality are more likely to occur in any individual who has not been provided with adequate support and understanding or has not been diagnosed and provided with help early in life.
FASD is caused by prenatal alcohol exposure/when an embryo or foetus is exposed to alcohol in utero/before birth	FASD is caused by maternal alcohol use/maternal alcohol exposure	When describing or defining FASD, the least stigmatising approach is to move the emphasis away from the behaviour of the birth mother and shift the emphasis towards the substance of alcohol.

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Women who use alcohol during pregnancy

Please use:	Instead of:	Why?
Confirmed alcohol use	Admitted to alcohol use	The term 'admitted' implies that this is a confession of wrongdoing, and has a moral judgement overtone. The term 'confirmed' is neutral.
Women who use alcohol or drugs	Alcoholics/ addicts Women who choose to drink	Research tells us that women do not intentionally seek to drink to harm their unborn children. Some women may be unaware of their pregnancy when drinking heavily. Some women have addictions and mental health challenges and find quitting extremely difficult, despite pregnancy. Some women have abusive partners who pressure them to drink while pregnant.
Do not use these terms. There are no replacements.	Poor choices Irresponsible Child abuser	

Adapted from Manitoba FASD Coalition, *Language guide: Promoting dignity for those impacted by FASD*, Manitoba FASD Coalition, Manitoba, 2017, www.fasdcoalition.ca/looking-after-each-otherproject/fasd-language-guide.

Adapted by Get into Neurodiversity for a global audience.

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