

NEWS RELEASE

FASD Common Messaging and Language Guide created to combat misconceptions about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Sept. 5, 2017 - The 18th annual International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day will take place this Saturday, September 9. The Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD) has released its FASD Common Messaging and FASD Language Guide in advance of International FASD Awareness Day. Both tools work to promote the dignity of those with FASD and help to explain the complexity of the disorder to those addressing the topic.

FASD is a complicated disorder that is often surrounded by stigma and misinformation. CanFASD's Common Messaging document is intended to improve public understanding of FASD by directly addressing many of the common misconceptions surrounding it.

"There is a lot of incorrect information about FASD and about people with FASD circulating in the public. That's why we developed a tool that addresses these topics head on," says Audrey McFarlane, CanFASD's Executive Director. "For example, news stories often pop up suggesting that small amounts of alcohol are safe to drink during pregnancy. In reality, despite extensive research, there has been no established safe level of alcohol to consume during pregnancy. This type of misinformation can have significant, lasting impacts on women and families and needs to be corrected."

The Language Guide is a tool that outlines common but unproductive language that is often used when speaking about FASD, then presents alternative language and the reason it should be used instead.

Dr. Nancy Poole, a CanFASD researcher, explains that FASD is caused by prenatal alcohol exposure, but the reasons why and how this happens are not quite so matter-of-fact.

"It is important to be empathetic and welcoming towards women who may have difficulty stopping or reducing their drinking. It is important not to use distancing terms like 'those women', or black and white terms like '100% preventable'. The motivations for peoples' use of substances is never black and white – it's a complex, multifaceted issue."

International FASD Awareness Day is held on September 9th – the ninth day of the ninth month of the year – to represent the nine months of pregnancy. The purpose of the Day is to promote awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy and improving the understanding of FASD so that those affected and their families can be better supported.

This year CanFASD will be supporting and promoting events of organizations and groups participating in International FASD Awareness Day. Most organizations will be holding events on Friday, September 8 instead of Saturday, September 9. CanFASD's social media platforms

will be highlighting FASD Awareness Day events happening around the country on September 8.

- Facebook – [Canada FASD Research Network](#)
- Twitter - [CanFASD](#)

About CanFASD:

The Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) is an interdisciplinary research network, with researchers and partners across the nation. It is Canada's first comprehensive national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. For more information on CanFASD, please visit:

<http://www.canfasd.ca/>

For expert commentary on International FASD Awareness Day or to learn more about the FASD Common Messaging and/or FASD Language Guide, please contact:

Audrey McFarlane, CanFASD Executive Director

780.815.0406

AMcFarlane@lcfasd.com