

# FASD and Legal Considerations: Training, Collaboration and Communication

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# Learning Objectives

1. Increased understanding FASD and the implication for justice measures
2. Familiar with screening tool ALARM
3. Identify impacts of cognitive disabilities for the justice system
4. Considerations for alternative measures – 3 C's

# Changing our Thinking

- Understanding FASD
- Revising our one-size fits all perspective (willingness to be responsive)
- Knowing our clients as unique individuals (understanding multi-disciplinary assessment)
- Adjusting our language for the client, support members and community partners



# Overview of FASD

- FASD stands for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Umbrella terms that speaks to the diverse brain injury that results from prenatal alcohol exposure
- Diagnosis is the result of a multidisciplinary assessment that at minimum includes a FASD trained physician and psychologist and at optimum a FASD trained Occupational and Speech Language assessment.
- FASD a medical diagnosis

# Challenges

- What you see is not what you get
- Dismaturity
- Typical indicators of ability are inadequate to effective interventions
- Extreme variance in presentations between individuals who are affected and unreliable abilities within the individual
- FASD a medical diagnosis with behavioral presentation

# ALARM Screening Tool (Conry and Fast, 2000)

- Adaptive Behavior—life skills, relationship, judgment
- Language-discrepancy b/w verbal & understanding
- Attention-impulsive & inability to focus
- Reasoning – inability to link actions with consequences
- Memory – weak short term memory, spotty, confabulation (looks like lying)

# Background

- Innovative Alexis First Nations Justice program
  - Multi-stakeholder
  - Built on restorative justice concepts
- Question of FASD clinical services
  - Ineffective justice interventions for clients with FASD
  - Impact of FASD assessment/diagnosis?
- Collaboration with Northwest Central Alberta FASD Services Network to create adult clinic

# Implications

- Need access to timely assessments
- Relevant and reasonable expectations
- Need a mentor/intervener
- Pre-meeting considerations
- Alternative measures
- Follow-up



# Consideration of 3 C's

- Question of informed consent
- Question of competency
- Question of compliance

# How Partnership Came About

- Unanticipated, unplanned \*\*
- Connections made by chance between FASD mentor and Alexis Justice Council
- Invitation to present on FASD Network services
- Funding from Alberta Health & Wellness for adult clinic
- Interest expressed in accessing FASD clinic services and supports for potential FASD affected offenders

Alberta

North Central Alberta Child and Family Services



Government of Alberta ■  
Health and Wellness



FASD  
service networks



# Program Goals

- Collaboration among justice professionals, clinicians, community and support team
- Translate assessment findings into clear implications and recommendations for justice process
  - Practical, simple, concrete
  - How will clinical data inform Justice process?
  - Specific court and probation recommendations
  - Justice's receptiveness and willingness to participate, take clinical findings and use them meaningfully
- Improve the justice experience and outcomes for offenders, Justice stakeholders, and community members

# Sailboat

- Organic, formative process
- Research driven by direction of the partnership
  - Addressing new questions arising from the perspectives of Justice stakeholders, clinical team members, and community members
- Guided by a group rather than an individual



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Thank you!  
Questions?

