



YUKON FASD ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2019





Co-chairs Message FASD Interagency Advisory Committee

It has been less than three years since the FASD Interagency Advisory Committee began its preliminary work on the development of Yukon's first FASD Action Plan. As a result of this work, we have already seen improved communication, cooperation and collaboration between the many members of our community. This is good news, as ultimately this is the long-term goal of this plan.

This plan would not have been possible without strong community commitment and a willingness to come to the table to strategize a different path forward. We want to recognize all members of the FASD Interagency Advisory Committee for the time they put into this important work. In particular, we want to acknowledge the people with FASD, and their parents and care providers, who shared their knowledge and experiences throughout the process.

We hope that the Yukon FASD Action Plan is shared widely throughout Yukon, and that it inspires all stakeholders to continue their work to improve the lives of people with FASD. For us, the key to success is in the name of the plan – Action. There is a need for collaboration that is both comprehensive and meaningful. Governments, service providers, non-governmental organizations, and people with lived experience all need to continue working together to achieve better outcomes for citizens with FASD, as well as improved outcomes for families and communities throughout Yukon.

Christine Tapp

*Director, Social Supports
Government of Yukon*

Andrea Monteiro

*Director, Corrections
Government of Yukon*

Shonagh McCrindle

*Executive Director
Inclusion Yukon*

Ministers' Messages



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an issue facing individuals and families in all Yukon communities. To address it, we need a collective response

– one that recognizes, respects and dignifies those living with FASD and their families while supporting families to have healthy pregnancies.

This Action Plan is part of our commitment to support healthy pregnancies, to expand maternal and pre-natal community-delivered supports, and to work across departments and collaboratively with our community partners to harmonize supports for people with FASD.

I would like to thank the members of the FASD Interagency Advisory Committee for their dedication and commitment to the development of this action plan. We are grateful for their time and effort, and for the care and support they provide to individuals and families impacted by FASD.

I would also like to thank the Yukoners with lived experience and their families for their guidance in the development of this plan. They are the true experts on this complex subject. I am humbled by their bravery, honesty and compassion.

Pauline Frost

Minister of Health and Social Services



It is important that we continue to work together to support women to have healthy pregnancies and to improve the lives of those living with Fetal Alcohol

Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Yukon. We engaged with Yukon First Nations and partners to ensure Yukon's FASD Action Plan reflects the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action that speak to addressing and preventing FASD, and working with the justice system to better address the needs of offenders with FASD.

This comprehensive plan provides a vision, principles, goals and actions for improving Yukon's response to FASD. The members of the FASD Interagency Advisory Committee were instrumental in creating this plan, along with our community partners across the territory. I thank them all for their dedication to addressing FASD in a collaborative and respectful way that will improve the lives of Yukoners.

Tracy-Anne McPhee

Minister of Justice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a term used to describe the impacts on the brain and body of people who were prenatally exposed to alcohol. It is a condition that affects people in all communities where alcohol is available.

There are many services and prevention and awareness initiatives in Yukon to support people and families living with FASD. Despite this, gaps still exist. Additionally, there has not been a coordinated approach to address the issue of FASD in Yukon. The Yukon FASD Action Plan is a response to this need. The plan builds on existing programs and services and identifies key priority actions that work together to create better outcomes for all people (infants, children, youth, adults and seniors) with FASD, as well as improved outcomes for families and communities throughout Yukon.

The FASD Interagency Advisory Committee was established in 2016 to oversee the development of a Yukon FASD Action Plan. Membership includes people with FASD and their families, and representatives from community agencies and non-profit organizations, First Nations governments, the Government of Yukon, Government of Canada and other contributors from across Yukon.

The Action Plan is informed by community engagement that began in May 2017 and lasted 10 months. The engagement was an opportunity to hear from Yukoners about their understanding of FASD and its impacts on communities, to learn about the gaps in services and how to work better together to support individuals, families and communities. Input was received from nine communities across Yukon.

The information gathered focused on six common themes: building awareness; anti-stigma supports; increased education, training and mentorship; increased community and locally lead supports; strength-based and resilience and holistic supports.¹ This information has been key to informing the main priorities and actions of this Plan.

The FASD Action Plan is guided by the following visions:

- ▶ All Yukon mothers experience healthy pregnancies and babies are born healthy and free from the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.
- ▶ Yukoners living with FASD have their condition recognized early in life and are appropriately supported throughout their lives to reach their full potential in healthy and safe communities.
- ▶ All Yukon communities are aware of FASD and its impacts, and have access to a holistic system that is supported by the best resources available to enable all citizens to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

¹ For those interested in learning more about the engagement process, a report summarizing stakeholder feedback is available at www.engageyukon.ca

The following principles are intended to influence the way in which policies, programs and services are created and delivered. They should be:

- ▶ Person- and family-centred
- ▶ Culturally responsive
- ▶ Strength-based
- ▶ Evidence-informed
- ▶ Community-informed
- ▶ Available throughout a person's lifetime
- ▶ Non-stigmatizing
- ▶ Informed by Gender Inclusive Diversity Analysis (GIDA)
- ▶ FASD-informed
- ▶ Trauma-informed
- ▶ Based on harm reduction
- ▶ Accountable

The FASD Interagency Advisory Committee established seven priority areas, each of equal importance, on which to focus the resources of the Action Plan in order to achieve the plan's vision. The priority areas are:

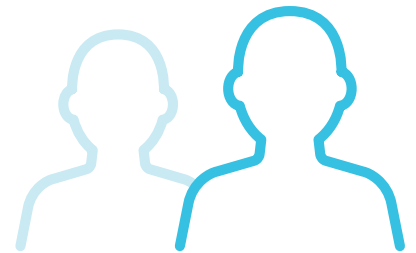
- ▶ Supports for people with FASD
- ▶ Support for families and caregivers
- ▶ Awareness
- ▶ Prevention
- ▶ Assessment and diagnosis
- ▶ Knowledge exchange and mentoring
- ▶ Research and evaluation

To promote a collective understanding, the Action Plan outlines each priority area, including its goals, key actions and the outcomes that are intended to be achieved through the actions. The Action Plan is a living document that will be revisited and reviewed regularly. Where new actions are warranted, a plan will be prepared that identifies objectives, interventions, supports and actions to be implemented in order to achieve the goals in each priority area.

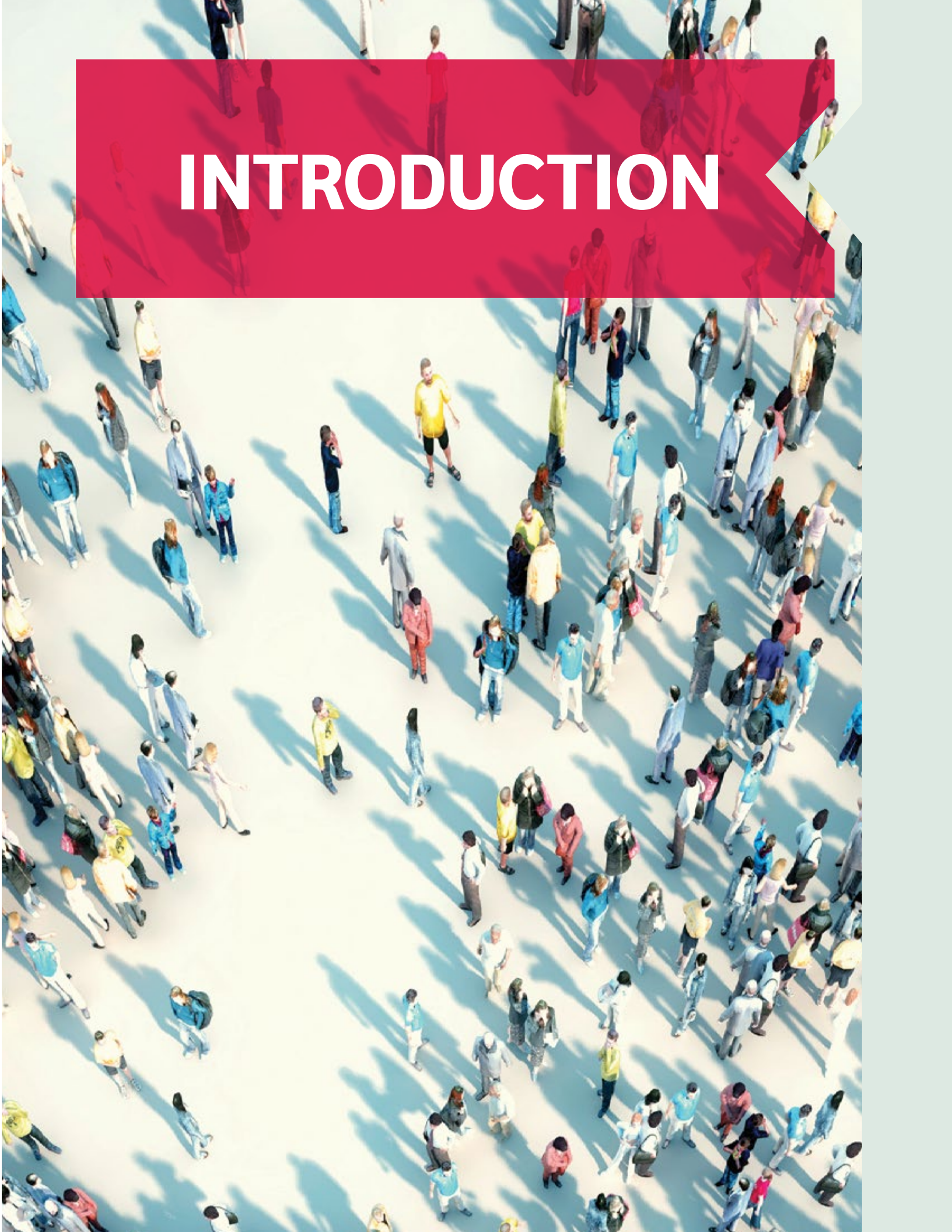
An evaluation framework has been developed that will be used to assess effectiveness of the initiatives in the Action Plan. Annual reports will be developed that outline the progress on new and existing initiatives and any challenges impeding implementation of the Action Plan.

“The difference between someone with FASD becoming successful or a statistic is support, structure and social integration! This is a community responsibility.”

– Engagement participant



INTRODUCTION



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a condition that affects all communities where alcohol is available. As such, our entire Yukon community is obligated to work together to respond to this complicated issue. This response must recognize, respect and honour those living with FASD, as well as their families. It has to recognize the challenges experienced by everyone living with FASD and provide them with the supports they need.

The response must also build public awareness and support prevention activities that involve women, their partners, families, friends and entire communities. We can all play an important role in supporting healthy pregnancies and healthy families. To make a real difference, we need to continue our work together to address the root causes of FASD.

What is FASD?

- ▶ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability. Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.¹
- ▶ The most significant feature of FASD is damage to executive functioning – the control centre of the brain – resulting in challenges to higher-level thinking skills (e.g. planning, emotional regulation, initiation, linking cause and effect, predicting, understanding abstract concepts, etc.)
- ▶ Alcohol is a teratogen, which means that it causes birth defects. The amount of alcohol that will cause a birth defect is different for each child. Therefore, the recommendation is not to consume any alcohol during pregnancy.

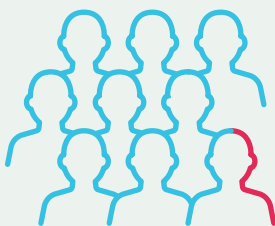
The prevalence of people with FASD in Yukon is not clear, however, we know that it is a significant issue facing many individuals, families and communities throughout the territory. FASD also has costly effects (human and financial) on many sectors of society including education, health, child protection and the criminal justice system.

¹ *Policy Action Paper: Toward a Standard Definition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada; Kelly Harding, PhD; Katherine Flannigan, PhD; Audrey McFarlane, MBA; Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network, Canada*

What is the prevalence of FASD?



FASD is the leading cause of preventable brain damage and birth defects in Canada.



Current studies suggest that **up to four per cent of our population has FASD**



A 2017 prevalence study found that **17.5 per cent of individuals in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre met the criteria for FASD.**

An estimated 7,500 Yukoners struggle with mental health or substance use issues each year. Further, 31.5 per cent of Yukoners report heavy drinking (five or more drinks at a time).

- ▶ The prevalence of FASD may be higher in Yukon because there are likely large numbers of undiagnosed and untreated individuals.
- ▶ Diagnosis can be challenging, as many individuals living with FASD do not present any obvious physical signs of the condition and cannot confirm prenatal alcohol exposure. This means that many people who need support often do not obtain it.
- ▶ In addition, the stigma associated with addiction and the fear that a child may be removed from the home may deter families from seeking a diagnosis and supports.

Despite the existence of programs, services and prevention and awareness initiatives in Yukon to support people and families living with FASD, gaps still exist. Additionally, there has not been a coordinated approach to address the issue of FASD in Yukon. The Yukon FASD Action Plan is a response to this need. The plan identifies key priority actions that build on existing programs and services and work together to create better outcomes for citizens with FASD, as well as improved outcomes for families and communities throughout Yukon. The collaborative approach that is embedded in this plan is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- ▶ Babies are born free from the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure and mothers experience healthy pregnancies.
- ▶ People living with FASD and their families, are respected and have access to a full range of available supports across their lifespan.
- ▶ All Yukon communities are aware of FASD and its impacts and have the resources to support people, from pre-conception to their senior years, to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

To promote a collective understanding, this Action Plan outlines each priority area, including goals, key actions and the outcomes we intend to achieve through the actions. The plan is intended to be a living document that will be revisited and reviewed regularly.



ACTION PLAN

ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT

Understanding and addressing the root causes of FASD, including the key determinants of health and well-being, is central to creating a holistic approach that supports families and communities to achieve positive outcomes. Recognizing this, Yukon’s FASD Action Plan builds upon and is informed by, a number of foundational sources and initiatives. These include:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Calls to Action: Directs 94 actions to all levels of governments and Canadians after the harm caused to Indigenous people by the residential school system. Two actions specifically focus on FASD.

TRC Calls to Action #33 and #34

- ▶ 33. “We call upon the governments of Canada, the provinces and territories to undertake reforms to the criminal justice system to better address the needs of offenders with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder...”
- ▶ 34. “We call upon the federal, provincial and territorial governments to recognize as a high priority the need to address and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, FASD preventive programs that can be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.”
- ▶ www.trc.ca

Prevalence Study – FASD and the Criminal Justice System by the Government of Yukon and by Justice Yukon and the University of British Columbia (2017).

- ▶ www.justice.gov.yk.ca/pdf/Corrected_McLachlan_Final_Report_to_Yukon_August_2017.pdf

Whitehorse Correctional Centre Inspection Report by David Loukidelis, QC (2018).

A report commissioned by the Government of Yukon to conduct an inspection of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, it makes recommendations for change that recognize the mental wellness challenges that affect many who enter the facility.

Report recommendations #4 and #5:

- ▶ 4. The FASD strategy for corrections in Yukon should, given the incidence of FASD-affected individuals at WCC and the behavioural implications of FASD, ensure that appropriate FASD-related services and supports are provided to WCC clients in a consistent, professionally-informed manner. This should include training for all correctional officers in how to work with individuals with diagnosed or suspected FASD.
- ▶ 5. Given the high incidence of FASD at WCC, the Corrections Branch should implement a program for managing the behavioural difficulties that FASD clients exhibit, including in relation to use of separate confinement for disciplinary purposes. The program should be informed by the FASD in Yukon Corrections strategy as it moves forward and be informed by best healthcare practice.
- ▶ www.justice.gov.yk.ca/pdf/wcc-inspection-report-david-loukidelis.pdf

Yukon Forum Joint Priority Action Plan (2017) – An agreement between Yukon First Nation and Government of Yukon leaders to work together on a shared set of priorities and actions.

- ▶ www.eco.gov.yk.ca/aboriginalrelations/pdf/2017_YF-Public-Joint-Priority-Action-Plan.pdf

Safe at Home (2017) – A community-based initiative working to improve available services for vulnerable people living in Whitehorse.

- ▶ www.whitehorse.ca/home/showdocument?id=9216

Forward Together – Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy (2016) – The strategy is a living document that adopts an inclusive, multi-sector approach to the development of a full-service continuum for mental health services.

- ▶ www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/mentalwellnesstrategy.pdf

Yukon FASD Prevention Gaps Analysis (2014) – A review of current programs and services generated a list of recommended actions to achieve a coordinated, inter-sectoral, FASD prevention system.

First Nations Mental Health and Wellness Curriculum (2013) – Provides mental wellness information and recommendations for practice and skill development for First Nation health and social service workers to benefit the individuals, families and communities with whom they work.

- ▶ cyfn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/First-Nations-Mental-Health-Curriculum-11-03-18.pdf

Yukon Interagency Network on Disability – The network provides support to its partner agencies in developing plans and identifying service gaps and works collectively to address systemic issues faced by people living with disabilities.

For more information, contact Teegatha’Oh Zheh

- ▶ www.teegathaohzheh.org

Canada Northwest FASD Partnership (CNFASDP) – The goal of the CNFASDP is to advance evidence-based policy development and service design in FASD prevention, diagnosis and support through the sharing of resources and expertise in Canada. Yukon joined the partnership in 2001 and was involved in the development of the Canada FASD Research Network.

Interagency Advisory Committee on FASD

An FASD Interagency Advisory Committee was established to manage and oversee the development of the Action Plan. It is made up of people living with FASD and their families, as well as representatives from numerous community agencies non-profit organizations, First Nations Governments, the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada and other contributors from across Yukon. For a full list of these contributors, see Table 1.

The Action Plan was also informed by community engagement that began in May 2017 and lasted 10 months. The engagement was an opportunity to hear from Yukoners about their understanding of FASD and its impacts on communities and to learn about the gaps in services and how to work better together to support individuals, families and communities. We received input from 120 participants in nine communities across Yukon. The information gathered focused on six common theme areas including: building awareness; anti-stigma supports; increased education, training and mentorship; increased community and locally lead supports; strength-based and resilience and holistic supports. This information has been key to informing the main priorities and actions of this Plan.

We are grateful to the members of the committee and all participants involved in the development of the Action Plan for their courage, commitment, insight and guidance.

This Action Plan is an expression of commitment by its contributors to make progress in each of the priority areas on the basis of meaningful collaboration and shared responsibility. A whole-government approach by key Government of Yukon departments and crown corporations, in collaboration with all other contributors, is required to implement the actions identified in the plan and to achieve its intended outcomes.

Table 1: Contributors to the development of the Action Plan

 <p>PERSONS DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY FASD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adults with FASD ▶ Parents/caregivers of people with FASD 		
 <p>GOVERNMENT OF YUKON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Health and Social Services (co-chair) ▶ Justice (co-chair) ▶ Education ▶ Yukon Liquor Corporation ▶ Yukon Housing Corporation ▶ Women’s Directorate ▶ Executive Council Office (Aboriginal Relations) ▶ The office of the Yukon Chief Medical Officer of Health <p>FEDERAL GOVERNMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public Health Agency of Canada 	 <p>COMMUNITY AGENCIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Inclusion Yukon (co-chair) ▶ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon (former co-chair) ▶ Child Development Center (former co-chair) ▶ Options for Independence ▶ Challenge Disability Resource Group ▶ RCMP M Division ▶ Teegatha’Oh Zeh ▶ Yukon College – Northern Institute for Social Justice 	 <p>FIRST NATIONS GOVERNMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Council of Yukon First Nations – Health and Social Development Commission ▶ Carcross/Tagish First Nation ▶ Champagne and Aishihik First Nations ▶ Kwanlin Dün First Nation ▶ Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation ▶ Ross River Dena Council ▶ Ta’an Kwäch’än Council ▶ Teslin Tlingit Council ▶ Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in ▶ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation ▶ White River First Nation



ACTION PLAN

VISION

Our future actions will be guided by the following vision statements:

- ▶ All Yukon mothers experience healthy pregnancies and babies are born healthy and free from the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.
- ▶ Yukoners living with FASD have their condition recognized early in life and are appropriately supported throughout their lives to reach their full potential in healthy and safe communities.
- ▶ All Yukon citizens and communities are aware of FASD and its impacts and have access to a holistic system that is supported by the best resources available to enable all citizens to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Action plan principles

The following principles are intended to influence the way in which policies, programs and services are created and delivered. They should be:

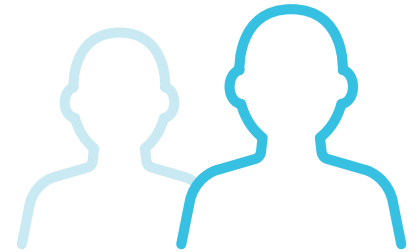
- ▶ **Person- and family-centred:** We will involve individuals with FASD and their families, as active participants in all aspects of their care. Decisions will be informed by the interests of individuals and families and by regular and open dialogue with care providers built on a relationship of respect and trust.
- ▶ **Culturally responsive:** Services must recognize and be inclusive of the multiple cultures and belief systems of communities affected by FASD. Service providers, professional staff and communities will recognize the need to deliver programming in a manner that is sensitive to the historical contexts, traditions and practices of Yukon First Nations and other distinct groups. Services will strive to be culturally and linguistically competent and appropriate.
- ▶ **Strength-based:** Services will emphasize the strengths, skills and interests of individuals, families and communities. People with FASD will be connected to programming, resources and supports that support them to realize their own aspirations.
- ▶ **Evidence-informed design and practice:** Interventions will be informed by evidence-based design and practice to ensure that interventions are empirically validated prior to their adoption. This includes building upon various forms of knowledge, including the traditional knowledge of Yukon First Nations people.
- ▶ **Community informed:** Sources of information and knowledge are not limited to academic research or professional spheres. They include the teachings of Elders, traditional knowledge and cultural activities, community aspirations and understanding the unique context of each community.
- ▶ **Available throughout a person's lifetime:** FASD is a lifelong condition. As individuals develop, their needs change. Interventions must be comprehensive; they must evolve to provide appropriate supports at each stage of development; and they should be tailored according to the severity of the condition, along with the needs of each individual at each stage of their life.

- ▶ **Informed by Gender Inclusive Diversity Analysis (GIDA):** GIDA is a method of assessing the impacts of decisions on people of all genders and on creating a space that includes everyone. The GIDA lens will be used to inform the implementation of the FASD Action Plan. FASD programs and services will be adapted as necessary to account for gender-specific differences and targeted interventions will be used to ensure that programs and services are equally accessible.
- ▶ **Non-stigmatizing:** We recognize our biases and attitudes and how they can affect client interactions and jeopardize the success of interventions. Our services will be compassionate, respectful and non-judgmental. They will build the trust necessary to connect families to the services that are essential to achieving healthy outcomes.
- ▶ **FASD-informed support:** Reflects the understanding that FASD is a life-long, irreversible condition that is often invisible, which affects the executive functioning part of the brain as well as the whole body. Attitudes, practices and programs should reflect the specific strengths and needs of each individual and focus on modifying environments, rather than expecting individuals to change. A diagnosis, performed by a qualified team, confirms the condition and identifies the supports needed by the person throughout their lives.
- ▶ **Trauma-informed practice:** We recognize that many of the clients we serve have experienced trauma during their lives. We will work from the basic premise that our interactions and interventions should do no harm to the clients we serve. We will create spaces where clients feel safe, respected and supported to promote their wellbeing.
- ▶ **Harm reduction:** Harm reduction refers to policies, programs and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of adverse life events and substance use. This approach reflects the realities of FASD and the need for ongoing support in implementing decisions.
- ▶ **Accountable:** Contributors to the Action Plan are accountable to each other as well as to individuals with FASD, their families and their communities. We understand that each contributor has different strengths and that to make progress we must work together to maximize these strengths.

“I know that I am a better person because of the influence of my sons on me and I continue to learn from them. They have taught me the values that are really important to hold on to and which I best let go of for everyone’s well-being-theirs and mine”.

– Parent of children with FASD

Government and non-profit organization contributors to the Action Plan are responsible for ensuring that their services and programs are delivered in a manner that embodies and respects these principles.





ACTION PLAN

PRIORITY AREAS

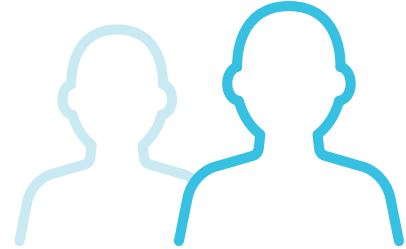
The Interagency Advisory Committee on FASD has established seven priority areas, each of equal importance, on which to focus the resources of the Action Plan in order to achieve its vision and goals.

The priority areas are:

1. Supports for people with FASD
2. Support for families and caregivers
3. Awareness
4. Prevention
5. Assessment and diagnosis
6. Knowledge exchange and mentoring
7. Research and evaluation

“When I step back and consider the effort each of our sons make every day in an attempt to live like others, I have tremendous respect for them”.

– Parent of children with FASD



1. Supports for people with FASD



GOAL

Yukoners with FASD have access to coordinated and effective supports and services that are tailored to their specific needs and available throughout their lives.



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Create a comprehensive inventory of supports and services available to Yukoners with diagnosed or suspected FASD.
- ▶ Ensure that anyone receiving an assessment is provided with an individualized support plan, regardless of whether or not the diagnosis is positive. This includes those who are involved with the justice system.
- ▶ Collaborate with the Yukon Interagency Network on Disability (YIAND) to increase access to quality and effective services that meet the needs of all people living with FASD.
- ▶ Work with the Office of Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT) on behalf of Yukoners with FASD who may not have support from advocates or whose families are no longer able to provide care.
- ▶ Work with Yukon First Nations to ensure that supports and services are meaningful and culturally responsive.
- ▶ Enhance counselling and therapy services to people with neurodevelopmental disabilities and FASD, including those in custody.

INTERMEDIATE – ULTIMATE

- ▶ Implement systems navigator pilot projects in Watson Lake and Dawson in collaboration with Kids Brain Health Network.
- ▶ Consider implementing new tools to support children and students with FASD, including the BC LEIC Tool.
- ▶ Engage with employers and community partners responsible for employment services, skills development and training to explore and implement measures that help people with FASD secure and maintain employment.
- ▶ Collaborate with the Yukon Housing Corporation and other housing partners to ensure that a continuum of supported housing is available for people living with FASD, including those who are involved in the justice system.
- ▶ Initiate a pilot project to enhance supports provided by Correctional Services (including the Community Wellness Court), to people with FASD while they are incarcerated, as well as during their transition back into the community.

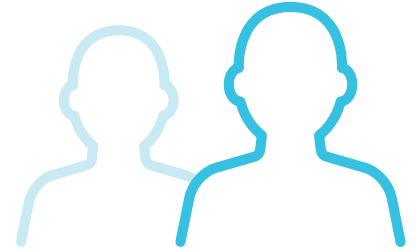


OUTCOMES

- ▶ Yukoners with FASD, regardless of their age or where they live, have access to a range of services that are structured around their individual strengths and needs throughout their lives.
- ▶ Yukoners with FASD are satisfied with the supports provided to them and feel involved in decisions about their care and ongoing supports.
- ▶ Partners collaborate to improve existing supports and introduce new supports for Yukoners with FASD.
- ▶ Early diagnosis and intervention leads to positive lifelong outcomes.
- ▶ People with FASD achieve meaningful goals in their lives and are healthy, safe and thriving members of their communities.
- ▶ Feedback from families and caregivers is routinely reflected in the treatment and care of their child.
- ▶ Yukoners with FASD have the skills, training and ongoing supports they need to find long-term employment in positions that are rewarding.
- ▶ Partners collaborate to ensure housing that meets the needs of Yukoners with FASD is available.

“When people with FASD do something stupid, or have a blowout and hurt someone, it’s because they’re scared and don’t understand what’s happening to them so they strike out. They don’t mean to hurt people and they’re sorry afterwards, but it’s too late. They need lots of support to figure out how to prevent or stop those things from happening.”

– Person with FASD



2. Support for families and caregivers

Parents, families and caregivers play a critical role in the lives of all people living with FASD. They create the loving, safe and structured home environments and serve as advocates for their loved one's health and well-being. They engage with health and social services professionals, teachers and the legal system, to obtain the necessary assessments, diagnosis and supports.

They are also a critical resource because they understand their loved one's interests, abilities and day-to-day challenges. This knowledge can increase the effectiveness of their child's support plans, which leads to improved outcomes. We value parents and families for their commitment, compassion and leadership, as many of the FASD services available in the territory exist because these people identified a specific need.

But parents, families and caregivers also need support and resources. Caring for family members with FASD can be demanding and challenging, especially when appropriate services and resources are not available. The types of supports needed by parents, families and caregivers include: system navigators; respite care; access to current information; strategies and tools for caring for people with FASD; family counselling; crisis intervention and prevention; and after-hours support.

While some of these support services are available in the territory, much more can be done to better support families. Moving forward, we will work to ensure that families and caregivers in all communities have access to services and supports that build on their strengths, meet their specific needs and help them thrive.

“As a parent of children with FASD, who are now adults, I have grown up with my children. They are my best teachers about how they experience the world – their interests, hopes, frustrations and successes and what they need in order to have a good life”.

– Parent of child with FASD





GOAL

Families and caregivers have access to adequate supports and services that help them care for people with FASD



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Help create peer support groups for parents and caregivers to meet regularly to share ideas, support one another and learn about effective parenting strategies and advocacy tools.

INTERMEDIATE

- ▶ Develop and implement self- or family-managed care program for families caring for people with FASD.
- ▶ Establish a respite care system that ensures the availability of consistent, reliable and safe respite care for families and caregivers.

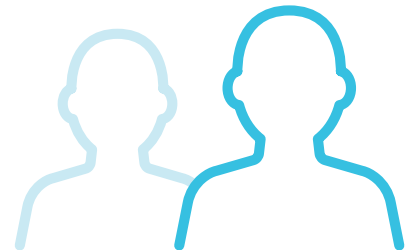


OUTCOMES

- ▶ Families and caregivers have access to culturally appropriate supports and services that contribute to a stable and happy home life.
- ▶ Partners collaborate to improve existing supports and introduce new supports for families and caregivers.
- ▶ Families and caregivers feel supported and are equipped to raise children living with FASD through their lives.
- ▶ Families and caregivers feel respected and heard in their interactions with service providers and feel that their perspectives inform the supports provided to their child or loved one.

“I have learned to understand their struggles as more symptomatic of underlying brain differences than intentional behaviour. I look for what’s hard and what supports might help knowing that, as adults, it is hard for them to accept supports.”

– Parent of adult family members with FASD



3. Awareness

Canadian FASD-prevention specialists have identified four effective prevention approaches, which are linked to overall alcohol strategies¹.

The first approach is about broad-based awareness and health promotion activities that support girls' and women's health and promote community development.

Throughout our community engagement, we heard about the lack of awareness about FASD, how to prevent it and how to best support those living with FASD and their families. This may stem from fear of FASD, the presence of stigma and stereotypes and the labeling of FASD as a condition. This lack of awareness and understanding can lead to individuals and families feeling frustrated, isolated and not able to access the support they require.

Public awareness initiatives are an important way to inform the public about FASD, the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy, ways to support families to have healthy pregnancies and ways to support people with FASD. They also serve as an opportunity to define the role of families, friends and communities in contributing to a reduction in the prevalence of FASD as well as increasing awareness in relation to the challenges faced by people living with FASD, to correct certain misconceptions about FASD as a whole-body and brain disorder and illustrate the positive strengths and contributions of those living with FASD.

In Yukon, several notable awareness campaigns have been developed. Most recently, the Interagency Advisory Committee launched a public awareness campaign that is garnering national attention. The campaign encourages women's partners, families and friends to play their part in supporting healthy pregnancies by choosing social activities that do not involve alcohol. A website provides additional information on how members of a woman's social network can support her during pregnancy (e.g. partners can abstain from alcohol, friends can offer help to alleviate stress, etc.).

Generally, awareness campaigns focus on FASD prevention, but ignore both the positive contributions people with FASD make to their communities, as well as the needs of them and their support networks. We will work to develop campaigns centred around positive and strength-based messages that also highlight the role communities can play in supporting people with FASD and their families.

"I wish for an FASD-informed and compassionate community that is responsive to the unique needs of families and individuals with FASD, that sees persons with FASD are worth it".

– Yukoner



¹ Canada FASD Research Network (2013). *Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): A multi-level model*. Adapted from PHAC (2008). *FASD Prevention: Canadian Perspectives*.



GOAL

Yukoners understand the causes of FASD, their role in its prevention and the strengths and contributions that people living with FASD can bring to communities.



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Broadly promote the release of the Yukon FASD Action Plan.

INTERMEDIATE

- ▶ Implement a territory-wide public awareness campaign developed through community-based partnerships that are tailored according to different audiences, cultures and linguistic groups.

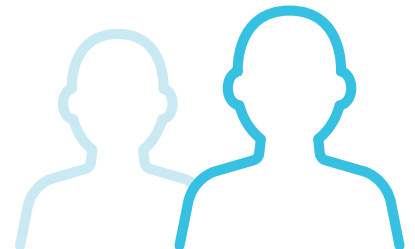


OUTCOMES

- ▶ Yukoners understand that FASD is a lifelong condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure.
- ▶ Yukoners realize that no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy and that FASD is preventable.
- ▶ Yukoners recognize the linkages between unprotected sex, consuming alcohol and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.
- ▶ Yukoners recognize that women do not consume alcohol to harm unborn children; there are a number of complex reasons contributing to prenatal alcohol exposure.
- ▶ Partners, families, service providers and communities understand their role in supporting women to have healthy pregnancies.
- ▶ The crucial role of families and caregivers in the care of Yukoners with FASD is widely recognized.
- ▶ Yukoners recognize the contributions of people with FASD and their families to communities across Yukon and that, to lead happy productive lives, people with FASD and their families, need respect and ongoing support.

“When the structure and support in our lives seems to be working, we are all less stressed and able to be who we really are. It’s at these times that I see their true nature of my children coming out and it is a joy to enjoy their humour, caring, accomplishments, and unique insights”.

– Parent of children with FASD



4. Prevention

Prevention of FASD is complex and involves much more than providing information about the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy.

Another effective prevention approach is based on giving girls and women of childbearing years the opportunity for safe discussion about reproductive health, contraception, pregnancy, alcohol use and related issues with their support network and health-care providers. The goal at this stage is to equip women and families with the information they need to make informed choices and to identify resources and services that can contribute to healthy pregnancies¹.

A third prevention approach involves providing supportive services that are specialized, culturally safe and accessible to women with alcohol problems, histories of violence and trauma and related health concerns. This approach has demonstrated that helping women plan their pregnancies, obtain prenatal care, improve nutrition, reduce stress and heal from the root causes of addiction all contribute to improving women's health and reducing the risk of having a child with FASD. This type of prevention tackles the pervasive barriers to accessing care and takes a trauma-informed and harm reduction perspective that supports improvement by recognizing and accepting their pace and types of changes each woman is able to make.

A fourth prevention approach is about supporting new mothers to maintain healthy changes in their alcohol use and related health and social choices that they have made during pregnancy. This approach also provides continued support for mothers who may have been unable to make the changes in their substance use during pregnancy, in order to improve their health and the well-being of their children.

A key to effective prevention strategies is to create healthier options, supports and activities for pregnant women, especially for those who are using or at risk of using harmful substances. For example, family support programs such as the Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) supports at-risk women who may lack supports and services and are using alcohol or other drugs during and after pregnancy. The goal of the program is to reduce instances of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure by providing ongoing support in the form of a home visit program and intensive case management.

Moving forward, we will work to improve prevention services, with a focus on increased education, providing support for healthy pregnancies and meeting the unique needs of people with FASD in order to create better health outcomes for mothers, babies, partners and families.

¹ Canada FASD Research Network (2013). *Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): A multi-level model*. Adapted from PHAC (2008). *FASD Prevention: Canadian Perspectives*.



GOAL

Yukon mothers, babies and families experience healthier pregnancies and outcomes.



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Enhance and develop targeted Level 2 prevention programs that focus on counselling and support for high-risk women, girls and their families, including contraception awareness, planned pregnancies and healthy pregnancy.
- ▶ Enhance or build on family support programs like the Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) and assess their benefits and applicability to communities in Yukon. Adapt the model to ensure the program is culturally and linguistically responsive to Yukon communities.
- ▶ Develop and implement a specialized Level 3 prenatal prevention program that provides housing and supports the unmet needs of pregnant women who are using, or are at risk of using, alcohol and drugs.

INTERMEDIATE

- ▶ Develop a Level 4 prevention program that provides the supports necessary for newborns to stay safely with their parents.
- ▶ Build on sexual health, contraceptive and planned pregnancy information and curricula. Initiate awareness and education campaigns on FASD targeting elementary and high school-aged youth.



OUTCOMES

- ▶ Women and girls receive consistent, supportive advice from service providers and health professionals about FASD prevention and maternal child health.
- ▶ Alcohol consumption among women who plan to become or are pregnant is reduced.
- ▶ Women and families feel supported, safe and informed about how to make healthy choices during pregnancy and about how to support the health and well-being of their children.
- ▶ Women consuming alcohol during pregnancy feel comfortable and safe in obtaining health services and supports prior to, during and after pregnancy.

5. Assessment and diagnosis

Assessments generally include a physical/medical assessment, a functional assessment and a review of the client's history. Diagnosis consists of a neurobehavioral assessment through an examination of abnormalities in the central nervous system. Even where there is not a diagnosis (i.e. the individual did not meet the clinical guidelines for FASD), an assessment can yield valuable information, helping the client to understand their strengths and challenges; an assessment can also help to inform future supports.

Multidisciplinary teams are assembled to conduct FASD assessments and diagnoses. Ideally, teams consist of a diagnostic clinic coordinator, psychologist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist and physician. Following assessment and diagnosis, clients, parents, families and caregivers receive resources and support services to develop and implement individualized support plans for the person with FASD.

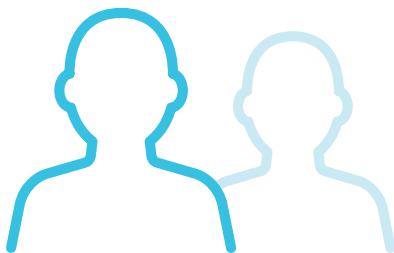
“It has been challenging at times understanding my children, my own reactions, and the variable response of service systems. We know that with consistent supports geared to their individual needs, persons with FASD are able to enjoy life, contribute to their community and enhance the lives of others”.

– Family member

In Yukon there are diagnostic teams to assess preschool children, school-aged children and adults. The Child Development Centre in Whitehorse organizes assessments for preschool children in Whitehorse and in the communities, while the Department of Education coordinates assessments for school-aged children. Assessment and diagnosis of adults with suspected FASD are conducted in Whitehorse by Disability Services in the Department of Health and Social Services. It is important to note that the provision of supports for individuals and families does not depend on a positive FASD diagnosis. To learn more about the diagnostic clinics in Yukon, follow the link below:

<https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2017/05/Yukon-FASD-FAQ-card.pdf>

While Yukon has developed the capacity to undertake assessment and diagnosis, it is recognized that communities remain under-served and challenges with diagnosing FASD still exist. Further research and increased capacity are required to assess emerging techniques that would allow us to implement more timely diagnosis and assessment throughout the territory.





GOAL

Yukoners with suspected FASD have access to assessment and diagnostic services as a first step toward obtaining individualized supports and services.

ACTIONS



IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Children, youth and adults diagnosed with FASD, including those who are involved with the justice system, are provided with an individualized report that details their strengths and needs and makes recommendations of needed supports.
- ▶ Diagnostic coordinators collaborate to ensure consistent standards and outcomes.
- ▶ Develop a public information document that describes how to access FASD assessment and diagnosis.
- ▶ Enhance Yukon's assessment and diagnostic capacity, with a particular focus on early screening.

OUTCOMES



- ▶ Yukoners with suspected FASD access improved assessment and diagnostic services and individuals with suspected or confirmed FASD access individualized supports that address their unique needs.
- ▶ Early diagnosis and intervention lead to positive lifelong outcomes.
- ▶ Feedback from families and caregivers is routinely reflected in the treatment and care of their loved ones.
- ▶ Yukoners with FASD, regardless of their age or where they live, access a range of services that are based on their individual strengths and needs and that are adaptable throughout their lives.
- ▶ Clients receive services, regardless of the diagnostic service provider, that are evidence-based and informed by promising practices and national standards.
- ▶ A standardized approach is used for assessment and diagnosis to ensure information is collected in a systematic way in order to track the prevalence and incidence of FASD in Yukon.
- ▶ Yukon youth and adults with FASD who are involved in the criminal justice system access improved assessment and diagnostic services and individualized supports that address their unique needs.

6. Knowledge exchange and mentoring

Yukoners in all communities have asked for increased FASD education, training, mentorship and knowledge. Although many quality training sessions on FASD have been delivered in Yukon over the years, the training has been uncoordinated and inconsistent. The development of informed standards and core competencies for FASD training for front-line providers, supervisors and policy makers is needed to ensure quality outcomes for people with FASD and their families. There is also a need for more training and mentorship programs, particularly for those living with FASD, in communities throughout Yukon – currently much of the training is delivered in Whitehorse.

A network of professionals, organizations, advocates, families, parents and caregivers could assess the need for FASD training and learning opportunities in Yukon. This network could then recommend options for FASD training, develop common standards for data collection and advance a shared agenda to transform the way FASD programming is delivered. It could also serve as a forum for people and organizations to share, to facilitate access to external networks and to develop opportunities for training, mentorship and support. Communities are the best source of information about their own needs and should be actively engaged.

Moving forward, we will develop standards and core competencies for training and mentorship and provide more training and mentorship opportunities. We will organize a network to coordinate, manage and evaluate FASD knowledge exchange, mentorship and training activities throughout Yukon.

“Our sons, like every person with a disability, are whole people. FASD definitely presents challenges for them, and those supporting them, but it isn’t all they are. They deserve to be known for more than their disability. They want to be known as competent, valuable, resilient citizens who try the best they can and, like others, sometime get frustrated at their own struggles to accomplish their goals”.

– Parent of children with FASD





GOAL

The territory's FASD training supports are transformed by the creation of a network of stakeholders who are tasked with FASD knowledge exchange, mentorship and training.



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Develop standards of care that support people with disabilities, to be adopted by all service providers in Yukon
- ▶ Develop an FASD-informed framework for knowledge exchange and mentoring that is built on a person-centred approach. Build on and establish standards, protocols and core competencies for FASD-informed care and training to ensure consistent FASD training throughout the territory.
- ▶ Establish a process for coordinating and responding to knowledge exchange and mentoring requests.
- ▶ Develop a process to measure the impact of FASD-informed knowledge and mentoring support on systems and workplace culture in organizations and institutions that support people with FASD.



OUTCOMES

- ▶ Individuals who work or interact with Yukoners with FASD are FASD-informed and equipped with the knowledge needed to provide effective supports.
- ▶ Children, youth and adults with suspected or diagnosed FASD in Yukon receive FASD-informed, non-judgmental and culturally appropriate supports.
- ▶ Training that is offered to individuals who work or interact with Yukoners with FASD is based on evidence and current research.
- ▶ Yukoners with FASD benefit from supports from service providers, families and caregivers whose knowledge and understanding of FASD evolves as new research emerges.
- ▶ Yukoners with FASD better understand their own condition, how it affects them and how to use their strengths while continuing to access supports that help them be successful.

7. Information gathering and evaluation

There is much we don't know about FASD. For example, a major issue across Canada and in Yukon is a lack of research examining the prevalence of FASD in the general population. The most recent Yukon-based prevalence study was a partnership between the Department of Justice and the University of British Columbia. Completed in 2016, the study examined the number of people with FASD who were either incarcerated at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or on probation. The study also investigated the degree to which addictions and mental health issues affected this population.

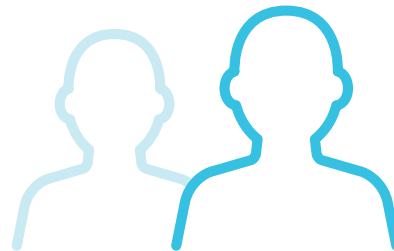
The study's results indicated that 14 of the 80 participants (17.5 per cent) "met the criteria for FASD" and that "there was insufficient information to make a reliable clinical decision" for 11 participants (13.8 per cent). FASD was not a factor affecting the remaining participants.¹

We need a better understanding of the types of FASD research that would best serve Yukon. Establishing a research agenda and implementing a systematic data collection process would help ensure that the incidence and prevalence of FASD in Yukon are better understood and that interventions are evidence-based and effective. Evaluation is also important to measure the outcomes and impacts of the work and to understand what is working and inform what needs adjustment as this Action Plan is implemented. An evaluation framework to accompany the plan is being developed.

Moving forward, we intend to establish and prioritize a research agenda, develop a data collection management system for the territory and effectively monitor the outcomes of the plan. This will allow us to make adjustments to ensure a better the system of supports for people with FASD and their families, as well as better outcomes for Yukoners.

"The expected lifespan of people with FASD in Alberta is 34 years of age. There is no reason to believe that it is any better here in Yukon – even after 40 years of work."

– Parent of a child with FASD



¹ McLaughlin, K. (2017). *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Yukon Corrections: Final Report to Yukon Justice: Estimating the Prevalence of FASD, Mental Health and Substance Use Problems in the Justice System*. Retrieved from: http://www.justice.gov.yk.ca/pdf/Corrected_McLachlan_Final_Report_to_Yukon_August_2017.pdf



GOAL

Research is used to validate supports prior to their implementation and evaluation leads to continuous improvements in FASD and maternal child health supports and initiatives.



ACTIONS

IMMEDIATE

- ▶ Prepare an evaluation framework to evaluate existing services, new interventions and actions introduced by the Action Plan.
- ▶ Develop and implement a data collection management system for FASD assessment and diagnosis, incidence and prevalence and treatment and care, with assistance from the Canada FASD Research Network.
- ▶ Support FASD-related research.



OUTCOMES

- ▶ Research contributes to an understanding of FASD, resulting in improvements to existing programming and the creation of new programs.
- ▶ Evidence-based actions and interventions are implemented and evaluated for their effectiveness in the Yukon context.
- ▶ Research is focused on the priority areas identified by the Interagency Advisory Committee and is relevant to Yukon in general.
- ▶ Evaluation findings result in service improvements and the introduction of new services and supports that benefit Yukoners with FASD.



ACCOUNTABILITY

AND MEASURING OUR OUTCOMES

The Action Plan serves as an expression of the commitment of its contributors to make significant progress in each of the priority areas. To support this Action Plan, an implementation plan is being created to identify leads, partners, resources (human and financial) and timelines.

We hope the Interagency Advisory Committee and targeted sub-committees will continue to guide this work throughout its implementation. Where new actions are needed to achieve the goals in each priority area, a plan will be prepared that identifies objectives, interventions, supports and actions. Actions will be based on strengths assessments, gap analyses, evaluation measuring the effectiveness of the approach and the needs of communities throughout Yukon.

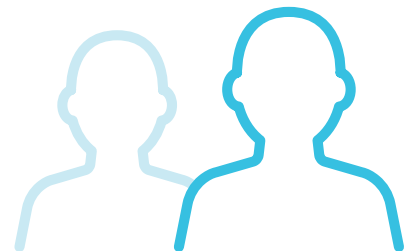
An annual report will be developed that outlines progress on new and existing initiatives and challenges impeding implementation of the Action Plan. In addition, government and non-profit partners will describe their respective efforts to integrate Action Plan Principles within their operations, whether through changes to existing or introduction of new policies, programming and training.

Conclusion

The development of the Yukon FASD Action Plan is the result of its contributors' and partners' dedication to create a collective response to FASD and to provide support for the people and families living with FASD in our territory. The plan sets out a way of working better together. The identified priorities, goals and actions will work to create better outcomes for all people, families and communities in Yukon.

“As parents, we are hopeful that the support we have provided over the years, that has made a positive difference in our children’s lives, will continue. A collective effort of concerned individuals, families, agencies and government programs is needed to build a sustainable circle of support for persons with FASD”.

– Parent of children with FASD



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APPENDIX A

Examples of programs and services available in Yukon

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is an important service for people affected by FASD, especially adults. It fosters individual independence through program supports that provide a protective and ordered environment. An example of a supportive housing initiative is the program administered by Options for Independence, which offers 14 one-bedroom and bachelor apartments to people with diagnosed or suspected FASD. The program provides a safe environment that fosters independence and stability. It includes a range of supports in areas such as case management, while other programs are delivered to promote health, social well-being, access to community services and recreation and employability.

Employment Opportunities

Challenge Disability Resource Group is an organization that provides a range of employment services to people with FASD. Important features of Challenge programming include employment placements, a pre-employment/return-to-work program supporting work and skills development in a group setting and job coaches who help individuals maintain employment. In addition, Challenge workers provide on-the-job support and can serve as a liaison between the client and employer. This facilitates effective ongoing communication and, where difficulties arise, helps both client and employer to resolve the issue.

Justice

An example of support for people with FASD who are involved in the criminal justice system is the Community Wellness Court and Justice Wellness Centre. The Community Wellness Court serves as an alternative to the formal court system for people with FASD, addictions or mental health issues. It uses comprehensive, culturally relevant strategies, beginning with the development of a wellness plan, to address the underlying factors that led to the offender's criminal behaviour. The Community Wellness Court is complemented by the Justice Wellness Centre, which provides participants with services (counselling, diagnosis, mental health and addictions treatment) to achieve the goals set out in the client's wellness plan.

A second program, the Alternative Measures Program is currently in the final stages of development. The Alternative Measures Program works with people with FASD (and others) to limit their involvement in the criminal justice system. It is a diversion-based program led by the Department of Justice, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Public Prosecution Service of Canada. For less serious offences, it uses restorative justice processes in place of the criminal justice system. People who are admitted to the program receive supports to address the root cause of their behaviour and work to make amends with the victim and community where the offence occurred through victim/offender reconciliation activities and community service.

Peer Support

Peer support groups are another example of a support for parents, families and caregivers. In Whitehorse, parents have formed an informal parent support group that meets every month to exchange information about available resources, lend support to one another and discuss services. In fact, many of the services available in the territory were created because a parent identified a need.

System Navigators

For parents whose child has been diagnosed with FASD, identifying where to obtain services can be an overwhelming experience. This is especially true when those services are not available in their community. FASSY, the Government of Yukon and Kids Brain Health Network have initiated a pilot project that aims to address the issue by establishing system navigators in Watson Lake and Dawson. Navigators will serve as a link between families in need of services and those providing services. As people who live in and know the community, navigators will be better-positioned to connect families with services. Navigators are also a resource for service providers who may be unfamiliar with the community, facilitating the provision of culturally sensitive services.

Awareness Campaigns

In 2015 the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of Yukon, launched an awareness campaign to illustrate the connection between social drinking, unplanned pregnancies and FASD. As part of the campaign, pregnancy test dispensers were installed in bathrooms at the Yukon College Ayamdigut Campus and the Dirty Northern Public House, a Whitehorse pub. The goal was to highlight the fact that women may not be aware they are pregnant for several months after conception. During this time, if a woman drinks, she will unknowingly expose the fetus to alcohol. Pregnancy tests are an inexpensive way to reduce incidents of drinking while pregnant.



