FASD: A Caregiver's Learning Series

In-Service Training

Course Description

This learning module includes three sessions that will help caregivers understand Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and how to better support children/youth with FASD.

- **Session 1: What is FASD?**: In this session, caregivers will learn what FASD is and how prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) can impact the whole body, most importantly, the central nervous system, the brain and their many functions. They will also learn about the importance of how diagnosis, assessment, and ongoing support improve developmental outcomes for an individual with FASD.

- **Session 2: FASD Across the Lifespan**: In this session, caregivers will learn how prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) impacts development across the lifespan. They will explore the concept of dysmaturity, the importance of interpreting behavior, and why traditional caregiving strategies may not work with children/youth with FASD. To optimally support an individual with an FASD, our perspectives require a shift to understanding FASD as a brain-based disability.

- **Session 3: Caring for Individuals with FASD:** Research shows that a stable home with caregivers who understand FASD and the importance of community advocacy, can have the most positive influence on a person with FASD. In this final session, caregivers will learn how emotional regulation, building good habits and creating competence support better outcomes for children/youth with FASD. Caregivers will also learn that research demonstrates how the five pillars of stability are necessary to support the children/youth with FASD in their care.

Learning Objectives

Session 1: What is FASD?

- Describe FASD as a lifelong disability.
- Define the words used to describe FASD.
- Explain how brain development and function is impacted by PAE.
- Describe FASD as a brain-based disability rather than a set of difficult behaviours.
- Explain the importance of an FASD diagnosis.
- Explain how assessment and providing lifelong supports improve outcomes for a child/youth with FASD.

Session 2: FASD Across the Lifespan

- Explain how prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) impacts a child/youth's developmental path.
- Define dysmaturity and describe its impacts.
- Discuss how our interpretation of a child/youth's behaviour responses impacts how we support them.
- Use strengths-based and growth-oriented language when communicating with others about children/youth with FASD.
- Identify ways to improve developmental outcomes for children/youth through the lifespan.
- Describe the systems that caregivers work with, the challenges that can happen, and how to advocate for the needs of the child/youth.

Session 3: Caring for Individuals with FASD

- Describe some common strengths of children/youth with FASD.
- Discuss the attitudes and approach to caregiving that support better outcomes for children/youth with PAE.
- Identify how connections to culture can support resilience and wellbeing in a child/youth with FASD.
- Identify and apply the most successful caregiving strategies with caring for a child/youth with FASD.
- Apply the five pillars of stability to help a child/youth with FASD succeed.

- Explain why caregiver self-care is important with caring for a child/youth with FASD.
- Develop a personal action plan for self-care.

Key Messages

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a lifelong, brain-based disability caused by prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE). It affects brain development and function, leading to various challenges that require a comprehensive understanding and diagnosis to provide effective support.
- PAE significantly impacts a child's developmental path, leading to dysmaturity and other developmental challenges. It's crucial to interpret behaviours through this lens and use strength-based, growth-oriented language to support children and youth with FASD throughout their lives.
- Successful caregiving strategies for children and youth with FASD include recognizing their strengths, fostering connections to culture for resilience, and applying stability pillars. Caregivers' attitudes and approaches play a vital role in achieving better outcomes.
- Lifelong support and advocacy are essential for improving outcomes for individual with FASD. This includes understanding the systems caregivers work with, addressing challenges, and emphasizing the importance of caregiver self-care to sustain their ability to provide effective support.

Guided Discussion Questions

- Now that you understand FASD as a Brain Based Disability how has that changed your caregiving?
- How is the development over the life span different for a child with FASD and a child who was not prenatally exposed to alcohol?
- What is one of the caregiving strategies that you are implementing since taking the training?

Resources

Resource one: Alberta Foster and Kinship Association
303, 9488 – 51 Avenue NW, Edmonton, AB T6E 5A6
(780) 429-9923 Toll Free (within Alberta): 800-667-2372
Caregiver Supports Program
Link: https://afkaonline.ca/programs/caregiver-support-program/

Resource two: CanFASD: Canada FASD Research Network
Link: https://canfasd.ca/

Resource three: FASD Alberta Network
Link: www.fasdalberta.ca

Resource four: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Government of Alberta
Link: https://www.alberta.ca/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd.aspx