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## FACTSHEET

February 2009

Ministry of Children and Family Development

### FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

B.C. is dedicated to giving children their best start in life and has emerged as a leader in FASD prevention, assessment, diagnosis, and in the development of supports for families.

#### KEY FACTS

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term used to describe the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy.
- FASD is one of the most common forms of preventable brain injury. There is no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy and there is no safe amount.
- Exact prevalence rates of FASD are not known. Health Canada estimates that approximately nine in every 1,000 infants are born with FASD.
- In 2003, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) led the development of B.C.'s first cross-ministry strategic plan on FASD. It was the first plan of its kind in Canada and provided an important framework for community and cross-ministry planning.
- In March 2008, B.C. released a new Provincial Plan. MCFD collaborated with eight other ministries to develop *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Building on Strengths (2008-2018)*. It includes a progress report on accomplishments since 2003 in FASD prevention, diagnosis, assessment and support, and a framework for strategic action over the next 10 years.
- The MCFD budget for FASD support services has doubled from to \$2.7 million in 2005/06 to \$5.4 million in 2008/09.
- In addition, the budget for FASD Strategic Initiatives in 2007/2008 was \$453,000.
- In 2006, MCFD has developed new key worker and parent support approaches for families of children and youth with FASD and similar neurodevelopmental conditions as part of a cross-ministry initiative to improve prevention, diagnosis, assessment, intervention and support. Expansion and refinement of services is based on research, evaluation and expert consultation.
- The focus of the key workers and parent services is on:
  - maintaining and enhancing the stability of families of children with FASD in order to improve the children's long-term outcomes;
  - increasing the knowledge of parents and professionals about developmental-behavioural conditions such as FASD; and
  - ensuring families have an ongoing network of support.
- Children and youth with FASD may also receive support from other MCFD programs.
- In 2006, a \$10-million FASD Action Fund was established through the Victoria Foundation to promote prevention, public education, and parent and caregiver education, and fund demonstration projects focused on improving outcomes for children and youth with FASD through peer support, social and life-skills development, and school-based initiatives. To date, more than 40 projects from around the province have received funding. A description of those projects is available on the Victoria Foundation website:  
[www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/)

- B.C. is a member of the Canada Northwest FASD Partnership – an alliance of the four western provinces and three territories that share expertise and resources in FASD prevention, diagnosis and support, and the advancement of research.
  - The Partnership established an FASD Research Network to enhance opportunities for collaboration and networking amongst FASD researchers working in the fields of prevention, diagnosis, support and intervention. The goal is to enhance high-quality, multi-site research studies, thereby increasing opportunities to attract large national and international research grants.
  - The resulting research will inform policy, practice, prevention, intervention and support initiatives so that B.C. continues to be a leader in the field of FASD.
- MCFD’s website includes comprehensive information on FASD prevention, assessment and diagnosis, and family support. For more information, visit: [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd).

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