

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: What Families Say about Parenting FASD



Children who have FASD are at increased risk of developmental challenges. There are ways however, to help children with a diagnosis succeed. These tips and resources were shared by experienced parents and caregivers who responded to an anonymous survey conducted by Formed Families Forward in spring 2023.

Protective factors for Children and Youth

- **Create a clear working routine**

This is a well known strategy, but it's a good one. Children with FASD may need more time to pick up on daily routines. Maintaining a consistent daily routine can help children stay on task and feel less overwhelmed because they know what is going to happen next in the routine. It may also help to have visual aids to help children remember what the routine is and feel more independent in their everyday activities.

- **Provide a stable environment**

Individuals with FASDs who live in orderly, consistent environments may be less likely to show aggressive behaviors and develop other challenging secondary conditions. *"The best protective factor for people affected by prenatal alcohol exposure is a stable placement."* - Comment from a FASD caregiver

- **Focus on the positive**

If a child is struggling with a task or situation and progress is limited, don't keep focusing on the challenging task. Stop and refocus on what they enjoy and praise success. Return to more challenging tasks in small doses. *"Once you find what your child is good at, they can excel in that area. They thrive in doing something that they do well."* -Comment from a FASD caregivers from FASD Hub Australia

- **Adjust expectations**

Children impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure may be 2-5 years developmentally behind peers of the same age. Shifting expectations to be more in line with a much younger child help the family see new opportunities for successes. Parenting strategies that once worked may not work with a child who has FASDs. *"We had to unlearn parenting strategies that worked for us growing up as neurotypical kids and learns a whole new approach to reaching our kids."* -Comment from a FASD caregiver

- **Connect to social and educational services**

When asked what services and supports were most helpful for their children with FASD at school, 80% of parents and caregivers named direct academic instruction and direct social skills instruction. The CDC states involvement in special education and social services as a necessary protective factor that helps children with FASDs reach their full potential. *"Families of children with FASDs who receive social services, such as counseling or respite have more positive experiences than families who do not receive such services"* (CDC, 2023).

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Recommended Resources

These resources were identified as helpful by experienced families:

Proof Alliance Support Groups

Proof Alliance connects families with similar experiences through virtual support groups. Support groups are also available for individuals impacted by FASD.

Facebook Support Group: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Caregiver Success Support Group

This is a FASD parent support group where parents can meet others and learn about different strategies and tips that other parent and caregivers recommend. This Facebook support group is a good way to meet other families and gain a supporting community.

Attachment and Trauma: Trust Based Relational Interventions (TBRI)

Trust Based Relational Intervention is a family based intervention that works to create a healing environment for children who have experienced relational based trauma. This was suggested directly from a caregiver who stated that it helped them accommodate the needs of their child.

Wrightslaw: FASD Articles

This is another direct suggestion from a caregiver. Wrightslaw provides articles on FASD and special education.

FASD United

FASD United, the National Voice on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder offers a resource directory, information for expecting mothers, recovering mothers, tools and tips for caregivers and parents, and other important resources for families.

Live Abilities Create Possibilities: Parenting Blogs

This site includes 4 different blogs. The blogs include different perspectives from parenting children with FASD to adults with FASD. One of the blogs is written by an adult with FASD, offering "wisdom and depth from the inside out".

Formed Families Forward: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Resource Page

Formed Families Forward's resource's page contains several fact sheets, strategies, educational handbooks, webinars and many other resources and supports for those wanting to learn more about FASDs.

This fact sheet was created by GMU intern Charlotte Walmsley for a Senior Research Project.