

(FASD)



Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term that describes a range of neurological impairments caused by exposure to alcohol before birth. FASD is an irreversible disability that ideally needs multidisciplinary support. It can affect learning, behaviour, emotion, and cognitive and physiological characteristics in learners.

Each learner living with FASD is a unique individual with their own culture, language and experiences. This will need to be considered to inform adjustments to their educational program and learning environment to support their needs. When you understand the impact of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder on the individual learner, you'll be better able to adjust to their needs.

Learners may have:

- behaviour that is not developmentally consistent and may be seen as immature
- impulsivity
- sensory issues and be overstimulated or understimulated
- attention difficulties
- hyperactivity
- memory problems
- slower processing speed
- difficulty with abstracting and predicting skills
- difficulties with problem-solving skills
- difficulties with judgement, for example, they will often peer into both good and bad decisions.

Diagnosis

- FASD is a complex disability with growing research and understanding about it.
- Ideally a multidisciplinary team will assess learners leading to diagnosis. The alcohol exposure can be diverse and there is no typical pattern of impairment. This can make diagnosis difficult and lengthy.
- About 2% of all Australian babies may be born with FASD. It's believed to be under-diagnosed.

Strengths of learners living with FASD

Learners living with FASD have various strengths such as:

- highly verbal
- willing
- determined, persistent
- helpful
- generous
- good with younger children
- athletic
- artistic, musical, mechanical
- friendly, outgoing or affectionate.

EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS