

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Community Survey 1999

Written by Kristine Daniels,
Summer Student for Healthiest Babies Possible

Ranging from 10 to 76 years of age, Prince George residents enthusiastically filled out surveys this past summer to see what they knew about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. In a matter of 2 days at the mall and a couple days on George St., a total of 352 individuals completed the questionnaire. Some of the interesting information gathered is as follows:

- **29%** thought that drinking a small amount of alcohol while pregnant would not cause FAS. Actually, there is no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.
- **58%** thought that even if a woman abused alcohol in the past she would not have a baby with FAS if she abstained from alcohol during her pregnancy. This is true.
- **86%** of people thought it was important that people in our community were trying to prevent FAS!
- **18.5%** of individuals said that taking the survey was the first time they had heard of FAS.
- **47%** thought that individuals with FAS would have trouble with the law while **63.6%** thought they would have later alcohol problems. While this may be true it should be noted that FAS, itself, does not

cause

anti-social behaviour or drinking problems. However, secondary disabilities such as depression, anti-social behaviours and trouble with the law, may result of decreased opportunity and a poorer living environment.

The Prince George FAS Community Collaborative Network would like to thank all those individuals who participated in the survey. The Network will be using the results to define future directions for an ongoing communication campaign in our city. If you would like to be involved in the Network or would like more information about FAS, the survey, or a copy of the results please call Healthiest Babies Possible at 561-2689.

The following is a copy of the survey used in this project. Please feel free to copy and use if you think it would be a valuable tool for use in your community.

1999 Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Community Survey Results

Survey Objective: to gather information on people's knowledge, attitude, and awareness of resources, in regards to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, for the purpose of determining which areas the Prince George FAS Community Collaborative Network needs to target in their up-in-coming Communication Campaign. As well, the results will provide a baseline from which to measure the Campaign efforts.

Survey Results:

- 352 individuals ranging from age 10 to age 76 participated in the survey. Of those, **126** were

male and **183** were female. **49%** or 173 people indicated they had been involved in a pregnancy.

- When asked to tick the correct characteristics of FAS participants correctly guessed brain damage (90%), learning problems (92%), low birth weight (88%), developmental delays (82%), hyperactivity (61%), facial changes (57%), and seizures (51%) of the time. Options which were ticked incorrectly included blindness (39%), paralysis (38%), cleft palate (31%), baldness (13%), and taller height (6%).
- Of the resources which are available for help or information on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (as per the *Prince George FAS FREE Community Resources* pamphlet), participants mentioned the following with the below stated frequency:

Doctors (can provide a referral to a paediatrician but will not perform a medical assessment of FAS)	43%
Psychologists (in general)	0.3%
Native Healing Center	3.0%
Dr. L. Mckinnon	0.0%
Healthiest Babies Possible	9.0%
AimHi (Infant Development Program)	0.3%
Child Development Center	0.9%
Aboriginal Headstart	0.0%
Metis Headstart	0.0%
Fetal Alcohol & Drug Resource Program	0.0%
FAS Community Collaborative Network	0.3%
PG Alcohol & Drug Services Society	0.0%
Public Health Nursing (Health Clinic/NIHU)	39%
Learning Difficulties Center of B.C.	0.3%
Drug & Alcohol Programs (in general)	4.0%
Northern Women's Retreat Program	0.0%
Detox/Assessment Unit	2.0%
Nechako Center	0.0%
Native Friendship Center	3.0%
Carrier Sekani Family Services	0.0%
Emergency Housing/Safe House (in general)	0.6%
Phoenix Transition House	0.0%
AWAC	0.0%
Support Group (in general)	0.0%
Pregnancy/Patenting/Substance Use	0.0%
FAS/FAE Care Giver Support	0.0%
Foster Parents Assoc	0.0%
School District #57	6.0%
Intersect	0.6%
Supported Child Care	0.6%

Hot Line (in general)	1.0%
Crisis Line	1.0%
Infant Help Line	0.0%
Alcohol & Drug Info. and Referral Line	0.0%
Motherisk Line	0.0%

Other places people thought they could get help included:

Salvation Army (0.3%)	Woman's Center (0.6%)	BC Medical (3%)
Library (5.4%)	RCMP (0.6%)	Internet (4.3%)
Prenatal Classes (2.6%)	Books/TV/Radio (4.8%)	Church (0.9%)
Pharmacy (0.6%)	Health Board (1.7%)	Phoenix Med.Building (1.1%)
PGRH (36%)	AA/NA/Alateen/Alanon (6.8%)	Social Services (4.3%)
E. Fry Society (4.0%)	Needle Exchange (1.1%)	Family/Friend (4.6%)
Day Care Program (0.3%)	Counselors (in general) (3.1%)	Parenting Group (0.9%)

Knowledge Questions:

- 93% of individuals correctly identified that all women who drink alcohol while pregnant put their unborn babies at risk for FAS.
- In a couple of questions which targeted the idea that a woman's baby would not be at risk for FAS if she abused alcohol before conception but quit for the duration of her pregnancy, an average of only 56% agreed (57.8% and 54.1%).
- 15% of individuals felt that a child would 'outgrow' FAS. That is, they would not have the birth defect as an adult. Alternatively, 73% correctly identified that this is not the case.
- 29% felt that drinking a small amount of alcohol while pregnant is safe while 58% correctly said it is not.
- 78% of participants were aware that beer and coolers are just as likely to cause FAS as hard liquor. 14.5% thought they were less likely to cause FAS while 8% did not know.

Attitude Questions

- In general, people felt that we all play a role in the prevention of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. While participants did feel it is the mother's fault if her baby is born with FAS, they also believed it is their responsibility to support a pregnant woman in the decision to drink non-alcoholic beverages (i.e.: by drinking something without alcohol to help her avoid drinking).

The most frequently cited places where people first learned about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome included:

Family/Friend (42.5%), School (40.7%), TV (36.8%), Doctor (25.4%), This survey (18.5%)

The most recent time people heard about FAS was from:

Family/Friend (28.5%), TV (23.6%), School (21.9%), Doctor (17.9%)

Copyright © 2000-
2003
Northern Family
Health Society

Updated: August 15, 2000