

Communication Campaign: A Major Tool for Social Marketing Prince George Campaigns

Other Campaigns

Pamphlets

After our second social marketing workshop in 2001, we developed a tagline that read

NOW THAT WE KNOW THAT.....

And then developed a pamphlet about FASD. This pamphlet was not just about the facts of FASD but more importantly it is about the women who struggles with substance misuse and how we as a supportive community can help.

We have included the text from our pamphlet. Again feel free to use it, just give us credit at Northern Family Health Society.

Pamphlet text:

Now that I know thatFASD IS A DISABILITY !

The effects of alcohol use during pregnancy vary with the timing, amount and length of time alcohol was consumed.

During the 4th week of pregnancy and up until the 8th week, the developing fetus is in a highly sensitive period of brain development. If damage is done to the brain during this time it will often times result in an invisible disability that will last a lifetime. The part of the brain that controls judgment, concentration, self-control, inhibition, conscience, personality, emotional traits and memory are the frontal lobes and these can be severely damaged.

The left hemisphere that deals with language and logic, reasoning, abstraction, facts and rules can also be irreparably damaged. The right hemisphere is the opposite and deals with holistic functioning and the creative visual, auditory and spatial functions. When the developing brain is exposed to alcohol any or all of these functions can be destroyed causing very poor inappropriate responses from the individual.

This brain damage is not an excuse for FASD individual's behavior but it is an explanation. We should consider when dealing with FASD affected individuals that they have been brain damaged in a very real way and for many they will be unable to correct this damage. Instead the best we can hope for is intensive and appropriate intervention techniques that consider the special circumstances of this person's birth and assist them in learning to live in the world with their disability.

DRINKING WHILE PREGNANT DOES NOT ALWAYS CAUSE FASD. Some babies are born healthy despite being prenatally exposed to alcohol. If you are unsure whether someone you know may have FASD, seek the advice of your doctor. FASD requires a medical diagnosis.

Now that I know that.....

....What FASD is

- A term now being used to describe a range of clinical conditions including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS), Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND) and Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD).
- Many of these affected individuals go unrecognized as they appear "normal" with above average IQ's and are often seen as deliberately defiant or disruptive.
- The spectrum of neurological damage with FASD causes many different cognitive and behavior problems.
- An invisible Mental Health disorder, generally undiagnosed or dealt with appropriately.

.....Who gets FASD

- FASD develops when the growing fetus is exposed to alcohol particularly during the first trimester of development when the brain is growing.
- A fetus developing in a low quality home environment with the presence of violence, abuse and poverty are at higher risk.

.....How FASD is diagnosed

- FAS is diagnosed through the specific presence of
 - Facial dysmorphology
 - Low birth weight
 - Maternal history of alcohol consumption
- FASD is more complicated to diagnose as not all markers are present in a spectrum disorder.
- A Pediatrician or FAS expert will need to be consulted. If you are concerned or want more information contact your family doctor or the Mother risk help line listed on the back.

.....What our Community can do to prevent FASD

- Begin to understand that FASD is an invisible disability.
- Encourage a healthy environment by discouraging alcohol abuse
- Support the recovery and healing of pregnant substance misusing women avoid blaming them for self-mediating inappropriately.
- Support the development of healthy self-esteem in young girls who will one day be mothers.
- Support families who are raising FASD affected children and adults.
- Come together with others to understand and learn more about FASD and the larger social issues that cause substance misuse.

....What Men can do to help.

- Pregnancy is a shared experience. A man can support his partner by NOT drinking during her pregnancy and by not wanting or asking her to drink with them.

.....What I can Do to help.

- Get involved in local initiatives.
- Stop 'women-blaming'.
- Start to understand that FASD is a symptom of larger social issue; poverty, violence, trauma, literacy, lack of housing, unemployment and abuse.

Understand Why Women Substance Misuse:

WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WOMEN MISUSE SUBSTANCES AS A WAY OF DEALING WITH THE PAIN OF THEIR PAST ...

- PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE
- LOW SELF-ESTEEM
- EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA
- UNADDRESSED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

THE PAIN OF THEIR LIVES NOW....

- VIOLENCE
- POVERTY
- MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- UNEMPLOYMENT
- LITERACY

AND THE HOPELESSNESS OF THEIR FUTURE.....

...UNLESS WE HELP TO MAKE THEIR FUTURES BRIGHTER.

....THERE IS A ROLE FOR THE COMMUNITY IN ADDRESSING FASD

If we sincerely wish to prevent FASD in our communities we must take a bold and unconventional step in looking at the relationship between FASD and substance misuse.

Alcohol use during pregnancy is inseparable from other factors in the lives of mothers and though many think it is easily preventable in fact the solutions are complex and must be considered from broad base circumstance such as poverty, abuse and literacy. As community members it is our responsibility to begin shifting our beliefs in why women substance misuse and in creating a more supportive and empowering environment to assist them in becoming strong and capable people again.

Treating substance misuse in women who are pregnant comes too late to help the unborn child so it is generally believed that prevention of addiction is the best way to prevent FAS. Ideally, what is needed is to ensure that women receive the support and services they require to avoid self-medication (substance misuse) as a coping mechanism for dealing with mental health and post-trauma issues. Addressing substance use requires dedication and long term planning for change in our communities and society. Everyone must be involved in recognizing that FASD is a preventable disability only if we can change the factors that create the need to substance abuse.

For more information on FASD; FAS, pFAS, ARBD, or ARND, contact:

National FAS/E Information Service
1-800-599-4514
www.ccsa.ca/fasgen.htm

FAS Family Center
Prince George Chapter
1-250-562-2123

Northern Family Health Society
Prince George, B.C.
1-250-561-2689
www.nfhs-pg.org

This pamphlet is produced through the cooperation of the Prince George FAS Network, a coalition of over 50 local agencies. It is supported with funds from Health Canada, Vancouver Foundation, Northern Regional Health Board - Children First Initiative with Ministry of Children and Families, Prince George Foundation, the Fraternal Order of the Eagles and Health Canada CAPC.