

Community Development and FAS

Individuals with special needs often see themselves as powerless and are socialized to rely on outsiders or service providers to meet their needs. Over time they become 'consumers' of service, helpless to become more productive or to be a 'producer'; and therefore more empowered.

As community developers we work to develop policies and activities that are based on the skills, assets and capacities of those marginalized in our neighbourhoods as well as with those with the power to affect their lives. It is their commitment to investing themselves and their resources that will ensure the success of community development. We can not wait for help to come from outside our communities or we will be waiting forever.

Let's begin by focusing on our assets instead of our needs. Development that starts in the community, with the FAS affected and their families as well as those willing to assist the cause will develop a strong sense of well being.

We must identify the many resources that already exist in our communities. Until we know what we already have we cannot look for new opportunities, new sources of funding, new ways of using existing resources and new possibilities for producing healthy communities.

So let's get started.

FAS Community Development Indicators of Readiness

The following framework is intended to help you determine whether your community is ready to start a process of FAS community development. This is required in order to strategically address the issues of FAS / pFAS in your community in a collaborative manner.

This framework is divided into 7 sections, each covering a different topic that should be considered before you begin community development work.

The intent of this activity is to help you identify your community's strengths, as well as the area, which may need further consideration.

This process will help your community formalize the strategic direction to take in developing a collaborative and dynamic community response to services and policy that will impact FAS.

For the purpose of clarity we will be using the term FAS to encompass both full FAS and partial FAS.

Topic Areas include:

- Your community's expressed need for change
- Level of community awareness about FAS
- People who can help
- Resources available
- The organizational structure
- Community Building blocks – mapping assets
- Community Readiness

1. Expressed Need for Change:

In order to begin the process of community development your community should first identify whether there is an expression of need for change related to FAS / pFAS as a social issue.

1. Is your community open to seeking solutions to address FAS?

2. Who in your community is affected by FAS?

3. What are the current policies in your community concerning FAS?

4. What services exist in your community for FAS?

5. What information is currently available on FAS in your community? (Pamphlets, videos, signage, etc.)

6. What is the identified issue of FAS in your community?

2. Community Awareness

This section will help you determine the extent of awareness in your community about FAS / pFAS and decide whether there is a need for a strategic communication campaign in order to shift attitude and gain the support of the community.

1. How would you describe the level of awareness in the community regarding FAS?

2. What ground work activities have been completed in the area of:

Community Education of your on FAS issues?

Conferences regarding FAS or related issues (addictions, handicaps):

Media releases and coverage of FAS activities or events:

Community Activities that include FAS as an issue:

FAS specific training with relevant service agencies:

4. Resources

Thinking “outside the box” about other possible resources or partnerships that could benefit your initiative, consider the various resources in your community. These might include agencies, organizations, people who are employed in an area dealing with related issues who could donate times, and other in kind contributions. This will help you to identify additional resources and what they could offer. (We will further explore the resources in the asset mapping section.)

1. Are there any agencies in the community doing work with respect to similar issues? List them.
2. What source of financial support is there available for FAS work? (local, provincial, federal, corporate)
3. Are there any in kind contributions; volunteers, donations, meeting space, etc. that could benefit your initiatives?
4. With in the already committed agencies, how much staff time can be contributed to FAS work?
5. What is the specific expertise found in you community and how can you get them interested in participating? (these might include proposal writing, training, facilitators, advertising, media, newsletters, business, medical expertise)

5. Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is the partnership between the various people, agencies and organizations that form the backbone of the community development work. In order to be successful with the community development, this supporting structure will need to be strong and viable.

1. Does your community have an existing supporting structure (i.e. Network, Alliance, etc) or will it need to create one?
2. If an organization already exists, are its guiding principles consistent with current FAS prevention values and beliefs (i.e. Harm Reduction).
3. How will the supporting structure ensure that the membership will be inclusive, share ownership and be representative of the community?
4. Does the organization have an established identity?
5. Is the organization's public profile favourable?

6. Community Building Blocks

This section will help you to identify three types of assets that assist your community in developing a strong sense of well being.

1. Primary Building Blocks, those located and controlled within your community and includes individuals, associations and organizations.
2. Secondary Building Blocks, those located in your community, but controlled outside such as private or non profit agencies, public institutions or physical resources.
3. Potential Building Blocks, those which are located and controlled outside your community and include public dollars and public information.

Primary Building Blocks

Individual Capacities: People and their expertise are our greatest assets. What specific talents, skills or experience are found in the people in your community that relate to working with FAS / pFAS issues?

- A. Talents:
- B. Skills:
- C. Experience:

What associations or organizations are located in your community, that may be stakeholders when it comes to issue of FAS / pFAS?

- A. Citizen Organizations:
- B. Cultural Organizations:
- C. Media Organization:
- D. Spiritual Organizations:
- E. Business Associations:

6. Community Building Blocks (continues)

Secondary Building Blocks are those located in your community, but controlled outside (i.e. hospitals). These organizations may also prove to be valuable assets in developing solutions to the issues of FAS.

A. Identify the private and non profit organizations in your community:

1. Colleges
2. University
3. Satellites Campuses
4. Hospital
5. Social Service agencies
6. Non Profits

B. Are there any public institutions and services who should be included?

1. public Schools
2. Police
3. Fire Department
4. Libraries
5. Parks
6. Recreation Facilities

C. With in your community are there physical resources, which may be used to develop your plan?

1. Vacant Lots
2. Vacant Commercial Land
3. Vacant Housing
4. Shared office space

6. Community Building Blocks (cont'd)

Potential Building Blocks are those which are located and controlled outside your community (ie. Public Admin Dollars), who may contribute to the development of a plan to deal with issues of FAS / pFAS.

1. Welfare Expenditure:

2. Public Capitol Improvement Expenditures:

3. Public Information:

4. Other funding potentials:

7. Overall Community Readiness

By now you should have a pretty good picture of your communities strengths, weaknesses, resources and assets. Given your preceding discussions and answers to the questions, how would you measure the readiness of your community for FAS development work, on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being the least ready and 10 the most ready.)

1

5

10

This “snap shot” of your community’s readiness should provide direction for the strategies needed to proceed with FAS community development work. As a group, write one sentence for each of the following areas that best describes your community’s “readiness” for change.

Our community has expressed a need for change

Our community is aware of the issue and the importance of FAS

We have people to advance the development of FAS issues

We have resources to do our community development work

Our organizational structure or agency is

Our community assets are

Our Communities Strategic Plan for FAS Community Development

To ensure our community is effective in building a capacity for changes in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, we will follow through on the following plans...

Strategy	By When	With Whom
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		