

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Colorado

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) result from prenatal alcohol exposure that disrupts fetal development. FASDs can be caused by alcohol exposure during any stage of pregnancy, including before a person knows they are pregnant, and result in lifelong symptoms. FASD is not a diagnostic term, but an umbrella term intended to encompass all the diagnostic categories designated by the Institute of Medicine.

Prevalence of FASD and Alcohol Consumption during Pregnancy in Colorado

- Nationally, 1 in 20 school-aged children are estimated to have an FASD (2.5x the rate of autism)¹
- In Colorado, 69.9% of women report some type of alcohol use in the three months prior to becoming pregnant²
- In Colorado, 15.7% of Colorado women reported consuming alcohol during the third trimester of pregnancy³

People with an FASD are more likely to show gaps in:⁴

- Problem-solving skills/executive functioning
- Memory
- Processing, including sensory processing and rate of processing
- Ability to remain attentive
- Understanding consequences

When untreated, FASDs can result in:⁵

- Difficulties with attention, self-regulation, decision-making and cognition
- School problems and employment failure
- Behavioral and mental health conditions and substance misuse
- Criminal and juvenile justice involvement

Recommendations:

Public investment is needed to build state capacity and enhance systems of care to respond to the needs of individuals and families impacted by FASD by:

- Increasing training capacity among professionals that come in contact with individuals and families impacted by FASD, including those in behavioral and physical healthcare, education, corrections, and other relevant fields
- Increase capacity of affordable, diagnostic, early intervention, skill building, and caregiver support services for individuals and families impacted by FASD
- Increase awareness of FASD among the general population to prevent and respond to FASD

About Illuminate Colorado:

Illuminate Colorado is a statewide nonprofit with the mission to strengthen families, organizations and communities to prevent child maltreatment. With a research-based approach that emphasizes building promotive and protective factors, we address systemic and multi-sector issues by collaborating with families and partners at the community, state and national level to develop and implement powerful programs, policies and initiatives that keep kids safe in Colorado. Illuminate is the Colorado chapter of FASD United, among other national affiliations.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Data & Statistics on FASDs. Retrieved From: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/data.html>

² CDPHE. (2021). Findings from the 2021 PRAMS summary tables. Retrieved From: <https://cohealthviz.dphe.state.co.us/t/HSEBPublic/views/2021TableauSummaryTables/2021PRAMSSummaryTables?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>

³ See above.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Basics about FASDs. Retrieved From: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html>

⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). FASDs and secondary conditions. Retrieved From: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/secondary-conditions.html>