



Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia Incorporated (DANA)

# DRUG AND ALCOHOL NURSES OF AUSTRALASIA POSITION STATEMENT

---

## **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)**

## OVERVIEW

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)** is a term used for a spectrum of conditions caused by fetal alcohol exposure. Each condition and its diagnosis is based on the presentation of characteristic features which are unique to the individual and may be physical, developmental and/ or neurobehavioral.

Nurses have an important role in asking women before and during pregnancy about alcohol use, assessing the risk of alcohol use, advising about the risks, assisting women to stop or reduce their alcohol consumption and avoid intoxication, and arranging further support as appropriate.

## POSITION

DANA is committed to increasing awareness, research and building capacity for early intervention of FASD. In recognition of the current National agenda on FASD, DANA advocates the following:

### 1. SUPPORT ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE THE DIAGNOSTIC CAPACITY FOR FASD:

- » Development of a diagnostic tool;
- » Promote the development of FASD diagnostic clinics across Australia and training for nurses on FASD.

### 2. SUPPORT ACTIVITIES TO BUILD THE EVIDENCE BASE ON FASD:

- » Targeted data collection on alcohol consumption during pregnancy and on diagnosis of FASD.

### 3. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR FASD PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

- » Dissemination of materials;
- » Assist with FASD community partnership programs;
- » Promote targeted campaigns.

### 4. BUILD CAPACITY OF THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY WORKFORCE:

- » Inclusion of FASD education in undergraduate nursing curriculum;
- » Targeted FASD education programs for practicing nurses.

### 5. ACCEPT SCREENING AND BRIEF INTERVENTION FOR ALCOHOL USE AS PART OF ROUTINE NURSING PRACTICE:

- » Enable nurses to routinely ask and advise all women about their alcohol use during pregnancy.

### 6. SECONDARY PREVENTION: SUPPORT AND MANAGE WOMEN WITH KNOWN ALCOHOL-USE DISORDERS:

- » Educate women on the risks of FASD;
- » Provide treatment and referral options.

## 7. SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH FASD, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS:

- » Support organisations that represents the needs of people with FASD, their families and carers;
- » Improve early intervention options;
- » Support FASD being recognised as a disability.

## REFERENCES

Alcohol in Pregnancy: What questions should we be asking? <http://webarchive.nla.gov.au/gov/20140802013746/http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/alc-preg-qu-doc>

Cook, J., et.al., (2016). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: a guideline for diagnosis across the lifespan, *CMAJ*, vol 188, no.3, pp. 191-197.

FASD: The Hidden Harm. Inquiry into the prevention, diagnosis and management of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs November 2012

FASD: The Hidden Harm DANA submission 2012

The Australian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Action Plan 2013–2016 Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-drugs-alcohol-index.htm>

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) <http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/disabilities/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd>

National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (NOFASD) Australia <http://www.nofasd.org.au/>

Reid, N., et.al., (2015). Systematic Review of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Interventions *Across the Lifespan, Alcohol Clin Exp Res*, vol. 39, no. 12, pp. 2283-2295.

Taking more action to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/budget2016-factsheet32.htm>

Watkins, R., et.al. (2014). Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: development of consensus referral criteria for specialist diagnostic assessment in Australia, *BMC Pediatrics*, vol. 14, pp. 178-189.

Darren Smyth  
President DANA, June 2017  
Revision date: June 2020  
Revised: June 2017  
Developed: July 2014