

FASD AWARENESS MONTH

PCAP in Alberta: Supporting Families to have Alcohol-Free Pregnancies

*Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability. Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges. It is estimated that 1-4% of Albertans have FASD. (Definition from Canada FASD Research Network)



The Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) supports individuals who are pregnant or recently post-partum by connecting them with resources and community services to help reach their self-identified goals. PCAP Mentors work with participants for up to three years with focuses on building relationships, reducing harm, and supporting changes through the development of the participant's self-efficacy.

Research and public health advice show that it's safest not to drink alcohol while pregnant. However, there are many reasons women and pregnant individuals may drink during pregnancy such as late pregnancy recognition, misinformation or conflicting information about the effects of alcohol on a fetus, social pressures, lack of support for challenging life situations, addiction. We all have a role to play in supporting families to be alcohol-free during pregnancy.

The four main goals of PCAP in Alberta are to:

- Support participants to reduce or stop alcohol and/or drug use during pregnancy
- Support participants to increase their wellness by creating self-determined goals
- Support healthy pregnancies and lives for the participants and their children
- Support community connection

PCAP Referral criteria: an individual is pregnant (or up to six months post-partum), poorly connected with community services, and used alcohol and/or drugs during the pregnancy.

*Individual agencies may choose to accept participants outside of these criteria according to their agency policies, mentor availability, and supervisor discretion.

PCAP works well within Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) strategies as prevention supports- In Alberta, it is part of the FASD Network model. Additionally, participants may have themselves been prenatally exposed to alcohol. Mentors can help participants with potential or diagnosed FASD find appropriate supports where they exist, or help navigate the assessment and diagnosis process.

PCAP is a research-based model that was developed at the University of Washington in the early 90s and was adapted for an Alberta context in 1999. In 2005/6, several First Nations formalized FASD prevention and support services with support from the First Nation Inuit Health Branch of Canada. In 2007, Alberta developed 12 FASD Networks to build awareness, promote prevention, increase access to FASD assessment and diagnosis clinics, conduct research, and provide support for individuals with FASD and their caregivers.

There are ~30 agencies providing PCAP across Alberta including service delivered on settlement and on reserve in several Indigenous communities. More information on PCAP locations can be found here: alberta-pcap.ca/ab-pcap-locations/



Making a Difference- PCAP Data:

**Data retrieved in August 2025 from the Alberta PCAP Council Penelope Database*

- 2131 participants supported since 2012 (average of 394 each year)
- 331 substance-free births since 2006
- 289 participants reduced alcohol use in 2024-25
- 75 participants completed FASD assessment and diagnosis since 2007

Positive community impacts (2024-25):

- 58% participants accessed recreation services
- 59% participants accessed counselling
- 90% participants accessed health nurse supports

PCAP walks alongside families every step of the way—because everyone deserves hope, understanding, and opportunity. This FASD Awareness Month, we invite you to stand with us in creating stronger, healthier communities. Together, we can reduce stigma, increase support, and open doors to brighter futures for families across Alberta. Learn more about FASD and PCAP, share with your communities, and be part of the movement for change.

Learn more here:

PCAP in Alberta www.alberta-pcap.ca

FASD Prevention Conversation: A Shared Responsibility www.preventionconversation.org

Alberta FASD Networks www.fasdalberta.ca

FASD In Alberta www.fasd.alberta.ca

Research on FASD and Prevention: CanFASD www.canfasd.ca

Research and resources on improving girls and women's health: Centre of Excellence for Women's Health www.cewh.ca