

# ALCOHOL RELATED BIRTH DEFECTS

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder FAS/FAE

**An Avoidable Tragedy: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome** (Video 1151) 1992; 21 min

Audience: general; parents of FAS children

Synopsis: Candice is a bright, articulate child when outside of school, but in class she can't do simple math problems and doesn't learn like other students. Corey has more severe problems that require full-time care from his parents and a youth worker. This CBC **Fifth Estate** documentary focuses on the problems faced by children with FAS and their foster parents. The importance of support groups is illustrated and parents voice their frustrations at getting support for their children. The program does not address social causes of alcohol abuse.

**Andrew's Story** (Video 1457) 1998; 43 min

Audience: general adult

Synopsis: Created to provide general information on alcohol related birth defects, this video uses dramatic vignettes to highlight its points. Much of the story is told from Andrew's perspective, here played by an actor. This prevention video is intended for viewing by prospective parents, to increase awareness of the ARBD problem and to raise questions about the hazards of alcohol use during pregnancy.

**David with FAS** (Video 1263) 1996; 45 min

Audience: general adult

Synopsis: This video is a clever entwining of the director's camera work with that shot by the subject of the film, David. The director gave David a Hi-8 camera and asked him to record a diary of his everyday life including everything he does and feels to help the viewer understand his affliction. Up until a few years ago when he was finally diagnosed with FAS, 21-year-old David never understood what he was doing wrong, why his adoptive parents were frustrated with him, why he was rejected, and neither did his parents. There are many moving scenes of David poetically expressing how he feels imprisoned by FAS, his suicidal ideation and depression. He believes that his ensuing battle with alcohol is because he was born an alcoholic. We witness the constant prompting by his caregiver throughout the day because he cannot manage many of the basic routines of his life for himself. Interviews with his parents and siblings provide insight into what it's like living with a family member who has FAS and how their lives were impacted before and after the actual diagnosis. The documentary also covers a conference on FAS where the disorder is explained and includes very emotional footage of David's family talking about how David has affected them. Although David is aboriginal, the video clearly makes the point that FAS can affect anyone.

### **The Listening Heart, 2005**

Audience: There are two versions of this program

Synopsis: The four families profiled here have all adopted children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Utilizing voices of both children and parents, each family's story relates to different concerns, ranging from the behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities, and social problems that affect the children's everyday functioning. This educational documentary for both health professionals and teachers, it is also of use to adoptive parents. There are interviews with medical experts who enlarge upon the information provided by the parents and children to provide methods and techniques to deal with the issues of FAS.

- (DVD 1713) 37 min (for adoptive parents and post-secondary students)
- (DVD 1714) Audience: **The Listening Heart Special Edition**, is for use by professional presenters, It contains a power point presentation and presenters guide.

### **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome & Fetal Alcohol Effect Series**

Audience: parents; health professionals; students 15 to 18 years

- **A Community Perspective, 1993** (Video 1235.1) 1993; 25 min

Synopsis: This is a three part series produced at the University of Lethbridge. Interviews with Fetal Alcohol (FAS) Children, their parents and experts document the difficulties families have in dealing with this birth defect. FAS Children of all ages from toddlers to young adults are profiled, many displaying a wide range of abilities and skills. One mother describes how her daughter does well with memory games when playing with one person, but becomes distracted and cannot concentrate in a group. Another parent discusses the high level of repetition that is required for her daughter to learn new skills. One expert asserts importance of it is that programs in academic and life skills be individualised for each child.

• **Teaching Strategies for the Classroom** (Video 1235.2) 1995; 24 min

This aim of this part of the series is to raise awareness about FAS/FAE among educators and health professionals. It stresses the importance of the relationship between the home and school in working out an individualised behavioural plan and school curriculum that take into account the child's unique needs so that s/he may succeed in life. Also featured are discussions between educators and parents.

• **Coping with Challenging Behaviours** (Video 1235.3) 1996; 25 min

The video is aimed more at caregivers and parents; it is introductory with the main point being that we can't change FAS/FAE children but we can try to change our view of them. We need to understand how their logic operates so we can reframe our thinking and strategies for dealing with them. There is a short discussion on adults with FAS/FAE and the need for flexibility in the workplace to accommodate them. The video stresses the importance of caregivers networking for emotional support in coping with the challenges of raising FAS/FAE children.

**FAS: A Sentence for Life** (Video No.1282) 1997; 23 min

Audience: general adult, adoptive parents

Synopsis: CBC's *The National* asks, is prison really the right place for people with FAS who have committed crimes, and, are victims of FAS simply "accidents waiting to happen?" Furthermore, because FAS victims don't learn from consequences, traditional methods of rehabilitation don't work and prison for them is a revolving door clogging up the justice system. Statistics are presented: sixty percent of people who had been affected with FAS have been in trouble with the law; it is estimated that more than twenty percent or more of inmates have some degree of FAS and that one in five hundred babies born in Canada has FAS. The documentary focuses on two cases, JF, a 26-year-old married man, and Mark a 19-year-old. Both men and their families talk of the struggle to understand why they repeatedly got into trouble never seeming to learn from their mistakes. A physician stresses the importance of early identification and a judge explains how the justice system fails offenders with FAS because no one is trained to recognise the syndrome or deal with the consequences.

**FAS: When the Children Grow Up** (Video 1585) 2002; 40 min

Audience: adoptive and natural parents; health professionals

Synopsis: The leading cause of preventable birth defects are described under the headings, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and partial FAS, called Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. Effects associated with FAS continue through life and become increasingly difficult to diagnose, as the children become adults. This documentary explores in the stories of three adults the realities of living with FAS, along with commentary from experts in the field.

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Effect: Stories of Help and Hope**

(Video 1236) 1996; 45 min

Audience: parents; health professionals; students 15 to 18 years

Synopsis: Of the women who consume alcohol while pregnant, sixteen percent will putting their fetus at some degree of risk, but no one does this deliberately according to an expert interviewed in this video. Physical profiles of both FAS and FAE are presented to demonstrate their similarities and differences. Many FAE children "talk better than they think," and as a result will often not be identified. These children tend to be punished for their behaviour, rather than getting the help they need. Interviews with physicians, educators and parents reveal how the behaviour of FAE children does not reflect the way they hear or see. Some are truly gifted in some areas and unable to perform simple tasks in another. The importance of correct, early diagnosis is

stressed and explores the relief and grief that parents feel. Parents must develop new expectations for their children and work differently, not harder to raise them successfully.

### **Living and Learning with FAS**

Audience: health professionals; parents

• **Assessment and the Early Years** (Video 1051.1) 1991; 22 min

Synopsis: This program follows several children through their physical and developmental assessments and shows the range of services they will need to reach their full potential. It also examines the problems they may face in school and suggests strategies teachers and parents can use to aid in the children's progress.

• **Adolescence and the Future** (Video 1051.2) 1991; 22 min

Jay, at 13, lives with an adoptive family. He struggles to cope with school, where he functions academically at a grade 4 level, but also mixes with others his own age in some classes. He frequently has problems with self-control, and his parents fear he will never be able to live independently. His father states, "be prepared for the long haul...it doesn't go away."

**A Mother's Choice** (Video 1212) 1995; 27 min

Audience: Aboriginal people; parents; women

Synopsis: Birth mothers of children in this program with FAS/FAE community and health workers explore the links between alcohol-related birth defects, health, economic, and social factors. In a series of interviews the roles of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, and family histories of violence and physical, sexual and substance abuse are shown to be contributors to the problem of alcohol related birth defects. Discussed also, the need for social support and other issues for the parents of FAS/FAE children.

**A Pregnant Woman Never Drinks Alone** (Video 1025) 1991; 48 min

Audience: general; women

Synopsis: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is a cluster of preventable birth defects. This video presents interviews with medical staff, social workers and foster parents who care for affected children. It contains some programs developed for high-risk groups and it shows that with good emotional support and the right services, children can learn and develop their potential.

**Sebastian: An Extraordinary Life** (Video 1181) 1994; 28 min

Audience: health care professionals; foster or adoptive parents; senior students

Synopsis: Sebastian is three years old and severely affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. This is a documentary of his life, and the struggles his adoptive parents have in his daily care. His medical requirements are extensive, including nine medications, feeding via tube, evacuation of his tracheotomy stoma, oxygen to assist his breathing and the occasional trip to emergency. Also featured is a support group, the Infant Stimulation Program that helps parents enhance their children's abilities. Parents also benefit by sharing their experiences in a group that cares for special needs children.

**Students Like Me: Teaching Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**

(Video 1483) 2000; 39 min

Audience: educators; students in professional programs

Synopsis: The biggest learning problem for children with FAS is the school system. Introduced by twenty-six year old Rob this program examines specific issues for teachers. Rob has FAS and was diagnosed at birth and his wish was that teachers knew more about FAS, what children with this disorder can and cannot do. Their intelligence and abilities vary considerable and specific advice is presented to enable these children to get the most from the school experience. They are for one thing easily over stimulated. Teachers are advised to make specific classroom modifications: having clearly defined activity areas, using subdued colours, and reducing clutter. Children with FAS may also have problems with transition and methods are demonstrated to deal with this and other issues.

## **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Criminal Justice System**

Audience: criminal justice workers; LAMHP; law practitioners

### **• Understanding the Offender with FAS: Talking with Victor**

(Video 1580.1) 2002; 43 min

Synopsis: Victor was a young adult in 1993 when he was charged and convicted of robbery. Affected by FAS and put up to the act by his cousin, Victor alone was charged and punished. This video interview of Victor provides insight into his life and experience with the criminal justice system also includes an interview with his probation officer

### **• Understanding the Offender with FAS: A Judge's Perspective**

(Video 1580.2) 2004; 56 min

Synopsis: This is the record of an informal lecture by Justice Cunliffe Barnett. Having learned about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome over 20 years ago while attending an FAS workshop presented by Dr. David F. Smith. Later, when he was the presiding judge in a child protection hearing of a young boy with severe special needs. This young person had been apprehended from alcoholic parents. Aware now with new understanding about the serious effects of alcohol use during pregnancy he requested an assessment for FAS. The story of Geoffrey who grew up to become both victim and offender, and several other cases are presented. Judge Barnett finds that people with FAS disabilities in the legal system are frequently unrecognized and misunderstood by judges, lawyers, social workers and others.

### **• Understanding the Offender with FAS: Mistakes I Have Made**

(Video 1580.3) 2004; 28 min

Synopsis: In this video, David Boulding admits to his mistakes as legal counsel defending clients with FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). However, in recognizing his error he presents his experiences as a lesson for those in the legal profession who may one day find themselves working with these special needs clients. Other aspects discussed are the implications of FASD in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the importance of obtaining an FASD assessment, and the concept of "Not Criminally Responsible by Reason of a Mental Disorder." He highlights the tendency for clients with FASD to be impressionable, suggestible and easily misled, hence assumptions that may seem reasonable for a typical client may not be appropriate for a client with FASD.

### **What is FAS? (Video 906) 1989; 25 min**

Audience: general; health professionals

Synopsis: Fetal exposure to alcohol can produce a range of health problems from a slight decrease in birth weight to the serious defect known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Severely affected children have characteristic facial features, growth deficits, and damage to the brain that may result in behavioural problems, learning disabilities and mental retardation. Some also have malformations of the heart, kidney or other organs. The extent and severity of the effects of alcohol on the fetus depend upon the dose and timing in pregnancy. Interviews with health professionals and parents of children with alcohol-related birth defects stress the importance of eliminating this preventable problem through early education and intervention programs.

### **What's Wrong with My Child? (Video 956) 1990; 24 min**

Audience: adoptive parents; pregnant women; health professionals

Synopsis: Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause neurological damage to the child, the video states. This results in behavioural problems in FAS children who are unable to relate action to consequences, and are often extremely vulnerable to the negative influence of others. FAS symptoms include the observable physical characteristics in as many as one in 500 children. The video goes on to say these children represent only a portion of those suffering from the problem. Michael Doris, author of *The Broken Cord*, is among those interviewed.

### **Worth the Trip: Children Affected by Fetal Alcohol (Video 1408) 1996; 57 min**

Audience: adoptive and birth parents; health professionals; post secondary students

Synopsis: This parent support video presents an overview of the problems faced by both adoptive and birth parents providing care for children with FAS. Divided into two sections, the first and longest (47 min), presents issues described by experts, such as Lynn Wiener and Barbara Morse,

which are then discussed by parent groups. The final short section deals with problems with "teaching and learning."