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Fact Sheet

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Fact Sheet: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Birth defects from women drinking while pregnant are permanent, preventable

- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) refers to conditions caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol, including fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).
- FASD are one of the most common causes of developmental disability and the only cause that is entirely preventable.
- FAS is a medical diagnosis defined by the presence of specific growth and nervous system abnormalities and other factors.
- Alaska has the highest rate of FAS in the nation among states that track this data. As many as 180 children are reported to the Alaska Birth Defects Registry each year with a suspected FASD.
- There is no known safe amount of alcohol to consume during pregnancy.
- Women should stop drinking prior to trying to conceive – alcohol can cause damage to a developing fetus even before a woman knows she is pregnant.
- FASD is found among all races and all socio-economic groups – wherever women drink alcohol, FASD can exist.
- FAS and all other birth defects resulting from prenatal exposure to alcohol are permanent.
- Alaska tracks the rate of FAS and FASD to identify risks associated with these conditions and improve prevention programs by targeting groups at risk.
- A state and federally funded Alaska Comprehensive Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Project has expanded the state's diagnostic capability, developed a multimedia public education campaign, and improved training for service providers in Alaska to help them better understand and serve affected individuals and their families.
- Like all disabilities, improvements can be made in how a person adjusts to their disability.
- With a comprehensive diagnosis, parents and providers can identify which services will most help children with an FASD in school and social settings.
- With the right diagnosis, support and understanding, many individuals with FASD can live happy and full lives.

For more information, go to www.hss.state.ak.us/fas/

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