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412

Will My Drinking Hurt My Baby?



**March of Dimes
Birth Defects Foundation**
1275 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains NY 10505

For more information on
drinking and pregnancy,
ask your doctor or your
local March of Dimes chapter.

This pamphlet is made
possible through contributions
to the March of Dimes.

For additional copies
contact your local
March of Dimes chapter.

March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation



Would You Give Your Newborn Baby A Drink of Liquor or Wine or Beer?

Of course you wouldn't. You know that a baby doesn't need or want alcohol in any form. You wouldn't think of putting an alcoholic drink in your baby's bottle because you know it's not good for him or her.

Well, exactly the same is true *before* your baby is born. When you are pregnant, every time you take a drink, your baby takes one too. The drink he gets is just as strong as the one you get, and because he is so much smaller than you are, it hits him a lot harder.

What's worse, his hangover could last a lifetime.

What Is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a pattern of physical and mental birth defects that are the direct result of the mother's drinking alcohol while pregnant.

FAS babies are abnormally small at birth, especially in head size. Unlike many newborns who are too small, few of these children catch up to normal growth. Most of them have small brains and show some amount of mental retardation. Many are jittery and poorly coordinated. They have short attention spans and behavioral problems. Their mental problems may not improve with age.

FAS babies usually have narrow eyes and short upturned noses. Some have heart defects, which may require surgery.

I Don't Drink That Much. Could It Happen To My Baby?

We don't know how much alcohol is "safe." The best decision is not to have any while you are pregnant—or when you might be.

About *one out of every 750 babies born has FAS!** That's a lot of damaged babies. We don't realize how common FAS is because we don't hear about it as much as other birth defects. We haven't known about FAS for very long.

What Can I Do About It?

Everything. Unlike many other birth defects, FAS is *completely preventable*. By you. Nobody else can do it for you—not your doctor or your mother or the baby's father.

FAS is forever. There is no cure. But it doesn't have to happen at all. All you have to do is say "no" to the next drink, and keep on saying it until after your baby is born.

Other Than The Tragedy Of FAS, Are There Any Other Reasons Not To Drink While I'm Pregnant?

Alcohol is a drug that adds calories, but no food value, to the diet—your diet and your developing baby's. Having an alcoholic drink instead of milk or fruit juice deprives your baby of the nourishment it needs to grow and develop normally.

Women who drink heavily during pregnancy have more miscarriages and more stillbirths (babies born dead) than other women. Even moderate drinking is suspected of causing those problems. It is also suspected of causing learning disabilities and minor physical problems. There is much we still have to learn, but pregnancy is no time for guessing how much is too much.

When Should I Stop?

It's never too soon.

From the moment of conception, your baby's organs start forming. Alcohol can damage them. For example, brain, heart and blood vessels start to develop in the third week of pregnancy. The heart begins to beat by the fourth week, even though the embryo is less than ¼ of an inch long.

Since most women do not know that they are pregnant until a month or more has passed, they may have been drinking all along. So the best time to stop drinking is *before* you become pregnant. If you are pregnant and are still drinking, the time to stop is *now*. If you need help, ask your doctor.

**THE ONLY SAFE ADVICE IS:
IF YOU DRINK HEAVILY,
DON'T GET PREGNANT;
IF YOU'RE PREGNANT,
DON'T DRINK.
YOUR BABY CAN'T SAY NO.
SAY IT FOR YOUR BABY.**

* Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services/Public Health Service: *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, January 13, 1984.

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
FIRST COMMITTEE OF REFERRAL

DATE: 1/29/90

FURTHER: Judiciary

Date of 5-Day Notice: 3/1/90
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: 3/8/90

H E S S Committee considered SB 412

"An Act relating to the distribution of information on the health effects of alcohol consumption."

and recommended:

- replace with _____ CS _____ same title
- attached amendment(s) new title
- _____ letter of intent adopted

do pass

do not pass

no recommendation

individual recommendations

further referral to _____

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department(s)/Date:

Department(s)/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____
Dept. Health & Social Services

zero fiscal note(s) _____

appropriation-no fiscal note

Governor's bill w/fiscal note

SIGNING DO PASS:

[Signature]
Tom Kelly

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Paul Frank (Do Pass)
Chair: Signature and Recommendation

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: _____ Agency Affected: Health & Social Services
 Title: An Act relating to requiring BRU: Administrative Services
Marriage Licensing Officers to distribute . . .
 Sponsor: Senator Binkley Components: Office of Prevention
 Requestor: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL	6.0					
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	6.0	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	6.0					
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	6.0	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
PART-TIME	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
TEMPORARY	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary) FY90 Fiscal Impact is "0". Based on the cost of a similar project, the Office of Prevention estimates that \$6,000 would be needed to prepare and print an Alaska specific brochure for distribution. Ongoing distribution costs will be absorbed within the Department of Health and Social Services current budget.

Prepared by: Sally Mead, Coordinator Phone: 561-4211
 Division: Office of Prevention Date: _____

Approved by Commissioner: Myra M. Munson Date: 2/20/90
 Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

Distribution (by preparer):

- Legislative Finance
- Legislative Sponsor
- Requestor
- Office of Management and Budget
- Impacted Agency(ies)

POSITION PAPER

Senate Bill No. 412

"An Act requiring marriage licensing officers to distribute information related to the health effects of alcohol consumption."

BACKGROUND

SB 412 requires the distribution of information regarding the dangers of the use of alcohol during pregnancy.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the term given to those infants who have been severely affected by the alcohol consumed by the mother during pregnancy. It is estimated that FAS may be the most common birth defect in the nation, although it has only been recently recognized. People must be given the information that drinking while pregnant is dangerous to the unborn child. SB 412 is an efficient and cost effective way to distribute information on this topic.

FAS information is currently being distributed by the court system using a brochure produced by the March of Dimes. Central supply at the court estimates that a maximum of 10,000 brochures are required for distribution each year. This allows one brochure to be given at the time of application for a marriage license and is sufficient for rural communities to include in a public information pamphlet rack.

POSITION

The Department of Health and Social Services supports this legislation as a way to assure that information regarding the dangers of substance abuse during pregnancy are distributed throughout the State. Educating Alaskans is a critical first step in protecting babies from the harmful effects of FAS.

Recommended by: Sally Mead
Sally Mead, Coordinator
Office of Prevention

Date: _____

Approved by: Myra M. Munson
Myra M. Munson, Commissioner
Department of Health and
Social Services

Date: 2-15-90



Alaska State Legislature

SENATE

Committee on Finance

Official Business

P.O. Box V
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

MEMORANDUM

March 6, 1990

TO: Senator Paul Fischer, Chairman
Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee

FROM: Senator John Binkley *John Binkley*

RE: SB 412 - requiring marriage licensing officers to distribute information related to the health effects of alcohol consumption

Sectional Analysis

Section 1. Adds a new section to the Alaska Marriage Code that requires every marriage license to include a brochure or other written material on the subject of alcohol-related birth defects.

The court system is responsible for providing these materials to each licensing officer.

Preliminary data indicates that approximately 5,000 marriages have been performed over each of the the past several years. Because the best medical advice includes "woman who are planning to become pregnant abstain from alcohol" newlywed couples are an ideal target audience for the message.

Intent language was included in the budget last year that the Court System distribute information on alcohol-related birth defects with each marriage license application. When the Governor vetoed this, along with other intent language, my office worked with Art Snowden's office, and brochures are currently being distributed. Statutory language, however, will assure that the policy continues in future years.

This bill is supported by the Alaska Court System and the Department of Health and Social Services. The Department of Health and Social Services has submitted a 6.0 fiscal note for preparation of an Alaska specific brochure.