



CHILDREN AND FAMILY FUTURES

Strengthening Partnerships, Improving Family Outcomes

To: Orange County Agencies and Organizations Involved with Prenatal Substance Exposure Issues

Children and Family Futures has been funded by First 5 of Orange County to undertake a preliminary review of Orange County public and private agencies' response to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). FASD is the most prevalent form of prenatal substance exposure, with available data indicating that 7-13% of all births in the county were prenatally exposed to alcohol. The effects of FASD on infants, children and youth, and adults include lifelong neurodevelopmental disabilities that are often under-diagnosed or mis-diagnosed. Children in child welfare and juvenile caseloads have much higher rates of FASD, with co-occurring mental health issues that can require extended, costly services. Projecting available data to Orange County totals indicates that a range of 40-70,000 children are affected by FASD.

The intent of this review is to gather information that would help County agencies and organizations to understand what FASD-related efforts are under way, with special focus on the implementation of Plans of Safe Care for infants who are substance-affected and the need to increase the availability of family-centered treatment in the County.

County agencies have been involved for more than two years in efforts to link child welfare caseloads affected by substance use with family-centered treatment services that benefit both parents and their children. New state legislation has for the first time specified FASD as a special education disability, and federal legislation now requires Plans of Safe Care to be developed for all infants affected by prenatal substance exposure. An interagency County team has been selected as part of a national intensive technical assistance project under the auspices of the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. These steps forward provide a foundation for improved identification of FASD and interventions to reduce its effects in the lives of children.

We are conducting a survey of county agencies that currently or potentially have roles in identifying and responding to FASD. This is based in part on an assessment of California state agencies' responses to FASD conducted in 2022. We would welcome your responses to these questions, as well as an opportunity to interview staff and leaders from your agency who are involved in these issues.

1. What current programmatic efforts are being made by your agency to prevent or respond to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders?
2. What materials are available from your agency describing these activities?
3. What data are available on the numbers of pregnant or parenting persons and infants involved in these programs?
4. Is your agency currently considering any additional activities related to FASD prevention or intervention? If so, what factors are affecting this decision, such as available prevalence and cost data, state or federal funding options, or models from other states and communities?

Please use this link to access the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DKFD9YW>. Additionally, please feel free to forward this to any staff from your agency or others that may be familiar with FASD issues in Orange County. If you have any questions about this project or these questions, please contact me at the email listed below. We would appreciate your response by May 15 in order to complete our report to First 5 in June. If an interview response would be more appropriate, please contact Naomi Nocum at nnocum@cffutures.org to arrange a convenient time.

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In our work as the federally funded National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, we have compiled resources relevant to prenatal substance exposure, including FASD, which are available at www.cffutures.org.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sid Gardner

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