

Joe Cressy 周凱捷

City Councillor | Ward 20, Trinity-Spadina

July 10, 2018

Board of Health
Committee Room 1
Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Members,

Re: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a brain-based, neuro-developmental disability with behavioural symptoms resulting from a fetus' pre-natal exposure to alcohol. The neuro-developmental impacts of FASD are on physical, behavioural, emotional, social and cognitive functioning (Health Canada, 2006; PHAC, 2005). FASD is the leading cause of developmental disabilities in North America.

A recent study conducted by Dr. Lana Popova of CAMH, involving 2,555 7-9 year students in GTA schools, found the prevalence rate to be 2-3%. This research, corroborates new research data emanating from the United States that estimates the prevalence rate for FASD to be 3-5%. Due to the stigma associated with women drinking while pregnant, it is believed that women tend to underreport their consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, leading researchers to estimate that the prevalence of FASD is under reported.

FASD is referred to as an invisible disability because, while a small percentage of those affected display facial features associated with FASD, the majority do not. They are assumed to be able to behave, perform and achieve like everyone else whereas in reality they simply cannot. Every day they experience failure when they are expected to live up to expectations that are unrealistic and do not take into account their damaged brains.

When FASD is not diagnosed early and followed by effective interventions, adverse outcomes can be expected. The costs of supporting those affected by FASD in Canada is estimated at \$6.2 billion annually. The estimated return on investment in prevention of FASD is significant.

People affected by FASD are some of the most vulnerable, misdiagnosed, misunderstood and at-risk members of our community. The Toronto FASD Coordinating Network has identified the need for all levels of government – Municipal, Provincial, and Federal – to work on three priorities: prevention, access to services, supportive housing.

Recommendation:

1. The Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health to consult with the Toronto FASD Coordinating Network on potential measures the City of Toronto could undertake to improve prevention, access to services, and access to supportive housing for people living with FASD , in consultation with the Affordable Housing Office, Social Development Finance and Administration, and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration as part of this report, and report back in Q1 of 2019.

Sincerely,

Joe Cressy
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