

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development
Beacon Community Services

Raising FASD awareness in Greater Victoria

VICTORIA – This morning, a nine-metre Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) awareness banner was unfurled across Douglas St. in Victoria to shine the spotlight on FASD Prevention and Support Month in B.C.

Minister of Children and Family Development Mary McNeil and Beacon Community Services CEO Isobel Mackenzie displayed the giant banner at the intersection of Douglas and Princess. This event comes three days in advance of FASD Prevention and Support Day in B.C. which is marked on Sept. 9. Every year, on the ninth day of the ninth month, this day is observed to highlight the importance of not drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Year round, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Beacon Community Services work in partnership to support healthy pregnancies, healthy moms and healthy newborns in the Greater Victoria area. Beacon Community Services – a community-based, not-for-profit services agency – offers a wide range of programs and services to thousands of clients in the Capital Regional District.

Several community-based programs in FASD awareness, prevention and support are run by Beacon Community Services. Pregnant women are encouraged to attend educational workshops informing them about the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant, and families living with FASD are given emotional and practical support.

One of these important programs is being highlighted today, having helped 20 adult women affected by FASD. The three-year pilot project, Healthy Steps Women's Program Adult FASD Diagnostic and Assessment Clinic, provided women living with FASD with information, counselling and support services. The knowledge gained from the program will be used to further educate the public about the harmful and lifelong impacts of FASD.

The program was funded by the \$10-million B.C. FASD Action Fund, established by MCFD in 2006. The fund – distributed through the Victoria Foundation – supported projects focused on improving outcomes for children, youth and adults with FASD and enhancing prevention and parent and caregiver education. Across B.C., more than 40 projects received funding.



Children and Family Development Minister Mary McNeil and Beacon Community Services CEO Isobel Mackenzie hang a 30-foot banner across Douglas Street, shining a spotlight on FASD Prevention and Support Month and highlighting Sept. 9 as a day to increase awareness about fetal alcohol syndrome.

Quotes:

Mary McNeil, Minister of Children and Family Development –

“We want to let all British Columbians know that there is no safe amount of alcohol and no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Through public education campaigns and services we’re supporting healthy moms, healthy babies and healthy families in communities throughout the province.”

Isobel Mackenzie, chief executive officer, Beacon Community Services –

“Through key worker supports for families who are raising children and youth with FASD, we address some of the permanent, lifelong challenges that result from FASD. Beacon Community Services offers a collaborative ‘wrap-around’ approach to aid those who are grappling with the consequences of this serious disorder and for professionals who seek additional resources.”

Quick Facts:

- FASD is an umbrella term that describes the range of effects that can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects can include physical, mental, behavioural and/or learning disabilities with lifelong implications.
- Health Canada estimates approximately nine in every 1,000 infants are born with FASD.
- B.C. is considered a world leader in the field of FASD prevention, diagnosis, assessment, intervention and support.
- In March 2008, B.C. released a 10-year provincial plan called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Building on Strengths (2008-2018). The plan establishes a guide to provincial, regional and community efforts to address FASD.

Learn More:

- For more information on FASD, provincial prevention strategies and programs to assist children and their families, go to: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/fasd
- For more information on healthy choices during pregnancy, go to: http://www.actnowbc.ca/healthy_choices_in_pregnancy/
- B.C.’s Baby’s Best Chance website is filled with up-to-date and practical information, useful tools and resources for women, expectant parents, and families with babies and toddlers. To get more information, go to: www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca
- For the provincial outreach program for FASD, go to: www.fasdoutrreach.ca/
- For more information on Beacon Community Services and its programs, go to: www.beaconcs.ca/

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect

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