

FASD

(fetal alcohol spectrum disorders)

An invisible hand in the health of lāhui

The Hawai'i FASD Action Group
www.fasdhawaii.org

The FASD Cycle

BLAME...most public health work on alcohol use during pregnancy in Hawai'i has been on "don't" or "stop" messaging, **leaving no room for the reality of complex use and exposure.**

DENY...physicians in Hawai'i share they are not prepared, trained, supported or comfortable diagnosing FASDs,⁷ **meaning data isn't being collected, and informed care isn't being provided.**

IGNORE...child welfare services, youth correctional programs, and social service **organizations in Hawai'i do not screen for FASDs** and have disproportionate rates of Native Hawaiian representation.⁶

SHAME...during childhood and across their lifespan people are **incorrectly diagnosed, treated, and labeled as "oppositional" or "defiant" for brain-based issues,** such memory deficits or sensory disorders.³

Alcohol, Pregnancy, and Culture

HAWAIIAN CULTURE

PREGNANCY

Well attended and revered as a sacred time. Birthing, postpartum care, and breastfeeding all supported by collective 'ohana and community.

ALCOHOL

Unlike the colonially introduced alcohol, 'awa (a non-narcotic, non-physiologically addictive plant) used in a restricted fashion for sacred ceremony.

MODERN HAWAII

PREGNANCY

Women most often have multiple demands on their energy, body, and time, and may or may not have any concrete, relational, or moral supports.

ALCOHOL

Highly concentrated, addictive and inexpensive alcohol is a legal, readily available substance. It is also highly "culturally" accepted for relaxation, socialization & celebration.

Nearly 1/2 of pregnancies in Hawai'i are unplanned.⁴

In recent surveys of pregnant and parenting women in Hawai'i at high-risk for an FASD and receiving support for a substance use disorder, **more than 60% identified as Native Hawaiian.⁸**

FASD is a Kākou Thing

MAKE IT SAFE TO TALK ABOUT...we can understand the complexity and **stop the blame and shame** cycles, appreciate that pregnancy and alcohol are complicated...and FASD is too.²

GET FASD-INFORMED...FASDs are spectrum of conditions, challenging to diagnose, and often present as "something else"...**being informed and curious is important** for everyone.

SCREEN ACROSS THE LIFESPAN...develop **a nuanced, specialized workforce,** including interdisciplinary, community-based, assessment & diagnostic capacity.¹ This is critical for Hawai'i.

SUPPORT THRIVING...people with an FASD can have significant health, educational, economic, and social challenges⁵if not given the right support, however, with the right support they can have **healthy, productive, thriving lives.**



¹American Academy of Pediatrics (2021) Common Diagnostic Approaches in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders/common-diagnostic-approaches-in-fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder/>

²CDC (2024) Alcohol Use During Pregnancy, <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol-pregnancy/about/index.html>

³Chung, D. D., Pinson, M. R., Bhendari, L. S., Lai, M. S., Patel, R. A., & Miranda, R. C. (2021). Toxic and Teratogenic Effects of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Fetal Development, Adolescence, and Adulthood. International journal of molecular sciences, 22(16), 8785. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms22168785>

⁴Hawai'i Department of Health (2020). PRAMS-Unintended Pregnancy Fact Sheet, https://health.hawaii.gov/fhsd/files/2020/10/Unintended-Pregnancy-Fact-Sheet_2020.pdf

⁵Matachón, K., Harrigan, K., Temple, V., Unsworth, K., & Cook, J. L. (2020). Difficulties in Daily Living Experienced by Adolescents, Transition-Aged Youth, and Adults With Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Alcoholism: clinical and experimental research, 44(8), 1609-1624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14385>

⁶Peper-Jordan, S. (2027). Hidden Data: the untold story of Native Hawaiian Children in Foster Care. Hawai'i Appleseed; Center for Law & Economic Justice, Taxes & Budget, <https://hiappleseed.org/blog/hidden-data-the-untold-story-of-native-hawaiian-children-in-foster-care>

⁷Statewide FASD Provider Survey Analysis, Retrieved from: <https://fasdhawaii.org/fasd-resources/>

⁸Hawai'i FASD Action Group-FASD Social Laboratory Project. Award no. OCS-GIA-23-87-Catalyst Group Full Evaluation Report, Retrieved From: <https://fasdhawaii.org/fasd-resources/>