

# WHATCOM COUNTY CHILD HEALTH NOTES

Whatcom County Child Health Notes is published by Whatcom County Health and Human Services / Children with Special Health Care Needs. This newsletter is intended to provide physicians and nurse practitioners with current information regarding identification and management of special needs conditions. Contributing agencies and programs include: the Medical Home Training and Resource Project (US Maternal & Child Health Bureau, project MCJ-53R001), the Whatcom County Interagency Coordinating Council, and the Parent to Parent Support Group. For information regarding Child Health Notes, contact WCHHS Child Services @ 738-2522 or 384-0574

## FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

*My husband and I are foster parents and have adopted six children. It was very valuable to get a confirmed diagnosis of FAS for our children from a FAS diagnostic team. I no longer felt crazy - there was a reason why my usually effective parenting tactics were not working. -Parent of a child with FAS*

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)** is a permanent birth defect syndrome resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure and characterized by:

### FETAL ALCOHOL DIAGNOSTIC AND PREVENTION NETWORK (FASDPN)

- Prenatal and/or postnatal growth deficiency
- Characteristic facial features
- Central nervous dysfunction

The Fetal Alcohol Diagnostic and Prevention Network is a network of community diagnostic clinics linked to the core clinic at the U of W Center on Human Development & Disability. These clinics provide screening, diagnosis, and prevention of FAS and related secondary disabilities.

University of Washington / CHDD  
FASDPN Core Clinic  
Seattle, Washington  
Contact:  
Kathy Tharp @ (206) 526-2522  
<http://depts.washington.edu/fasdpn>

The FASDPN Diagnostic Clinic closest to Whatcom County is:

Snohomish County FASDPN  
Pacific Treatment Alternatives  
Everett, Washington  
Contact:  
Rosemary Steyerman  
@ (425) 259-7142

At least 5,000 infants are born in the United States each year with FAS (1-3 per 1,000 live births). **Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)** or **Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)** are terms used to describe children exposed to alcohol in utero without growth deficiency or characteristic facial appearance who present with behavioral and cognitive deficits. The incidence of FAE/ ARND is unknown, but is believed to be several fold greater than FAS.

**Children with FAS and FAE/ ARND** have lifelong primary disabilities which may include lowered intelligence, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, poor judgment, poor social adaptation and behavior problems. Without appropriate identification and intervention, secondary disabilities can include mental illness, substance abuse, and antisocial behaviors.

**There is no determined safe amount or frequency of alcohol use** during pregnancy. FAS and alcohol related conditions occur across all ethnic, racial and socioeconomic, backgrounds.

### What you can do in your office practice:

- Provide prenatal counseling regarding the risks of in utero alcohol exposure
- Monitor length, weight, and head circumference on a growth grid at each visit
- Screen the development of all children by parent questionnaire at each well child exam
- Pursue developmental assessment if you suspect developmental delays

**If FAS or alcohol related conditions are suspected**, obtain information regarding prenatal alcohol exposure and consider diagnostic evaluation.

**Where to Start:** Links to local, regional and internet resources