

D.4: Developmental Diagnostic and Support Clinic – fetal alcohol spectrum disorder assessments

Unit: Disability Services	Effective date: July 25, 2022
Branch: Social Supports	Last updated: July 25, 2022
Policy number: D.4	Review date: July 25, 2024

Purpose

This policy describes the eligibility criteria to access fetal alcohol spectrum disorder diagnostic assessments through the Developmental Diagnostic and Support Clinic.

Developmental Diagnostic and Support Clinic seeks to provide timely multidisciplinary assessments with practical recommendations, while respecting and supporting individual client and family needs.

Policy

1. Developmental Diagnostic and Support Clinic (DDSC) provides fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) assessments to adults aged 19 or older. Children aged 18 or younger are assessed by the Child Development Centre.
2. Adults may self-refer or be referred by a support person, family member, or other interested party.
3. DDSC uses the Canadian Diagnostic Guidelines to diagnose FASD.
4. DDSC's multidisciplinary team for assessing FASD includes a physician, psychologist and clinic coordinator.
5. In cases where prenatal alcohol exposure – a required component of an FASD diagnosis – cannot be confirmed or in cases where the client does not have the sentinel facial features, clients may choose whether to continue with the full assessment to better understand their unique pattern of strengths and areas of need.
6. DDSC encourages the client to identify and involve a support person who can support them through the process of the assessment.
7. DDSC files are stored separately from Disability Services client files and may not be accessed by DS social workers without client consent.

Definitions

Canadian diagnostic guidelines: A set of evidence-informed guidelines for the diagnosis of FASD with or without sentinel facial features.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: A medical diagnosis resulting from a person being exposed to alcohol while in utero. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can result in a wide variety of developmental, cognitive, physical and behavioural impairments or delays which can vary in combination and severity.

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Neurodevelopmental domains: Includes motor skills; neuroanatomy/neurophysiology; cognition; language; academic achievement; memory; attention; executive function, including impulse control and hyperactivity; affect regulation; and adaptive behaviour, including social skills or social communication.

Prenatal alcohol exposure: Exposure of a fetus to alcohol while in utero. Prenatal alcohol exposure can cause significant damage to a developing fetus, particularly in the early stages. Confirmation of prenatal alcohol exposure is a requirement to deliver a diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Prenatal alcohol exposure can be confirmed through reliable reporting of alcohol use by the client's mother, or confirmation of the presence of the three sentinel facial features.

Sentinel facial features: A range of facial anomalies that can occur as a result of prenatal alcohol exposure. There are three features which commonly occur across age, gender and ethnic groups: small palpebral fissures (that is, short horizontal length of the eye opening), smooth philtrum (that is, diminished or absent ridges between the upper lip and nose) and a thin upper lip. These three facial features are so specific to prenatal alcohol exposure that the presence of all three replaces the need to confirm prenatal alcohol exposure through other means.

Authorities

- Health Act (Yukon)
- Financial Administration Act (Yukon)

APPROVED BY:		Director, Social Supports
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