

Building FASD-informed practice in the alcohol and other drugs workforce

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Background: Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services are a key point of contact for people of reproductive age, yet many practitioners report limited confidence and knowledge in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), alcohol free pregnancy conversations, and stigma aware engagement. Prevention messaging in AOD settings has often relied on simplified or risk focused approaches, which can contribute to stigma and disengagement, particularly for women and families experiencing vulnerability. There is a need for practical, trauma aware and strengths-based workforce strategies that support respectful practice.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: NOFASD Australia, in partnership with the Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD) and the Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Council (AADC), developed an evidence based, self-paced online training program for the Australian AOD workforce. Adapted from an existing CanFASD program, the course focuses on FASD informed practice, neurodevelopmental disability, and stigma aware engagement. Designed for practical application, the training supports professionals to apply FASD informed strategies, strengthen alcohol free pregnancy conversations, and improve engagement without blame or judgement.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: Initial implementation indicates strong acceptability among AOD professionals. Participants report increased confidence in understanding FASD as a hidden disability, greater comfort discussing alcohol related risks, and improved awareness of how language and stigma influence engagement. The interactive, self-paced format supports accessibility across jurisdictions, including regional and remote areas.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Targeted workforce education can strengthen AOD service responses to FASD prevention and support. Ongoing evaluation and sector partnerships will inform future refinement and implementation.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations

communities: Building FASD informed capability within the AOD workforce supports safer, more respectful engagement with women, families and people living with FASD. This contributes to improved prevention practice, reduced stigma, and more inclusive service responses.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None to declare.