



National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Helping children & families by advocating for the prevention and intervention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, the leading known cause of mental retardation & birth defects in the United States.

FASD: What the Media Should Know

Mass media plays a significant role in the daily lives of women and children, making it an invaluable platform for disseminating messages about preventing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

- The average American youth spends one-third of each day with various forms of mass media, mostly without parental oversight.
- More than 50% of regular drama viewers report that they have learned something about a disease or how to prevent it from a TV show. Nearly one-third of viewers report that they took some action after hearing about a health issue or disease on a TV show.



Mass media campaigns can create awareness, change attitudes, and motivate individuals and communities to engage in healthy behaviors.

- A CDC-led review of the research literature revealed that mass media campaigns can be effective in preventing alcohol-impaired driving, with a median decrease of 13% in total alcohol-related crashes.
- Studies evaluating the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in reducing tobacco use (as measured by statewide cigarette sales) found a median decrease of 15 packs per person per year.

A review of national network evening news broadcasts between 1977 and 1996 found that alcohol and pregnancy was a topic in only 36 of the newscasts.



The most effective media campaigns target specific audiences while taking into account the audiences unique preferences and needs.

Media campaigns currently being evaluated for FASD prevention include:

- A campaign targeting African-American women, ages 18 through 35 years, at risk for pregnancy (St. Louis, MO);
- A campaign using a “narrowcasting approach” targeted to White, Hispanic and African-American women ages 18 to 30 (Los Angeles, CA);
- A campaign aimed at reducing prenatal alcohol use in rural areas, targeting women enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program (Iowa City, IA).

More information available at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/pubawareness.htm

The Media can help prevent FASD by:

- Including stories on the dangers of drinking while pregnant in health and community-related sections of print media and broadcasts;
- Incorporating audience-specific FASD prevention public service announcements in programming targeted to youth or women of childbearing age;
- Reporting on alcohol-related commemorative events, such as Alcohol Awareness Week or International FASD Awareness Day (September 9);
- Depicting responsible behavior, such as abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy, FASD prevention messages and addiction treatment, in television programming and cinema;
- Participating in FASD or substance abuse-related community coalitions.