



CHILDBIRTH PREPARATION AND SUPPORT TOOL

Information for Health Care Providers

The attached *Childbirth Preparation and Support Tool* was created for health care providers to use with their patients who might require extra support during pregnancy and childbirth. Examples include individuals who are experiencing a combination of challenges with their mood, behaviour, interpersonal relationships, learning and employment.

This tool aims to help providers learn more about individuals with complicated emotional and behavioural presentations that are often misdiagnosed and misunderstood. Our system tends to support these complex needs through a mental health and trauma lens. However, the more obvious presenting difficulties, which may be more clearly identified while exploring this tool, are often further complicated by hidden symptoms that can be supported by understanding the life-long effects that neurodevelopmental disabilities have on the brain.

These symptoms are commonly found in people experiencing:

- The implications of prenatal exposures to alcohol and other substances
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Learning disabilities
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

This tool also facilitates deeper conversations and collects detailed information to identify symptoms and needs while developing support plans related to:

- Medical and sensory issues
- Communication
- Memory
- Anxiety and stress
- Personal safety and relationships
- Finances
- Housing
- Parenting and postpartum support

It is important to note that many people with FASD are often misdiagnosed. The prevalence rate of FASD is 4% of the Canadian population, which is higher than autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined (2018, Harding et al).

This tool will be helpful to anyone who is marginalized and is meant to augment existing perinatal forms and screening tools. It should be completed with the parent-to-be and a health care team member. We suggest that a copy be given to the patient to have with them at medical appointments. If possible, keep a copy in the patient's medical records or Ontario Perinatal Record.

Note: Many health and social service providers are unfamiliar with or have had minimal training regarding the implications of prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) and FASD across the lifespan, and therefore, may not always screen accurately. The Province of Ontario understands this and has committed to providing broad service provider training to improve outcomes while working to raise awareness and prevention efforts (the link to the full [press release](#) can be found in the References section on page 13 of this document).

For any questions about the use of this form, please contact: Health Nexus at info@healthnexus.ca or 1-800-397-9567.



CHILDBIRTH PREPARATION AND SUPPORT TOOL

Information for Parents-to-be Preparing for Their Baby

Congratulations! You are about to have a baby! This can be both an exciting and stressful time for you and your circle. We wish you all the best!

We have created this tool to help you and your health care team (doctor, nurse, midwife, obstetrician, social worker, etc.) understand what will make your childbirth experience as good as it can be. We know that some of us have unique and sometimes complicated mental health, sensory, learning, and organization/planning needs. Your health care team thought that this tool may help.

This tool:

- Will be kept confidential and be shared with your health care team only.
- Will be helpful to everyone and especially for people with needs that are not always visible or easily understood.
- Is meant to add on to the forms and records that people need to prepare for childbirth, e.g., medical records, screening tools.
- Should be completed together with your health care team.
- Should go home with you so you can take it with you to appointments and classes that help you prepare for childbirth.

For any questions about the use of this form, please contact: Health Nexus at info@healthnexus.ca or 1-800-397-9567.



I AM HAVING A BABY, AND THESE ARE SOME THINGS THAT MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS SHOULD KNOW

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Pronoun: _____ Preferred Language: _____ Contact number: _____

Family Doctor: _____ Due Date: _____

1. Support person(s)

I will do better with a support person who knows me well and who can stay with me because:

(Check all that apply)

- New experiences and places sometimes worry me.
- This will help me to stay calm and keep me feeling safe.
- This will help me say what I need to say.
- They can clarify things that I might not understand.
- This will help me remember things that are important.

The person who is going to support me during my pregnancy and hospital or birth centre stay while I have my baby is:

(I know that this may not be possible due to changing policies to keep us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic)

Support person's name: _____

Contact number: _____

Alternate support person's name: _____

Contact number: _____

Other people (e.g., support worker) that may help me (either in-person or virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic) during my pregnancy, with my hospital stay, and with a coordinated support plan are:

Agency Name: _____

Support Person's Name: _____

Contact number: _____

Agency Name: _____

Support Person's Name: _____

Contact number: _____



2. Medical

I have the following health issues that may affect the way I cope with labour, birth, and after the baby comes: *(Check all that apply; Provider: please refer to antenatal record for full medical history)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling tired a lot. | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling down or depressed. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling low energy a lot. | <input type="checkbox"/> Worrying a lot. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of pain:
<input type="checkbox"/> Stomach pain
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches
<input type="checkbox"/> Other pain: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use issues now or before, e.g., alcohol or drug use. | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating and body image issues. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse or trauma now or before, e.g., sexual assault, child abuse. | <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble paying attention or losing track of what is around me. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulties with learning or understanding. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I have attached a list of medications I currently use. |

3. Sensory

I may have hidden sensory needs, for example: *(Check all that apply)*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bright lights are uncomfortable, so please dim them if possible. | <input type="checkbox"/> High-pitched sounds or low tones and vibrations that may not bother other people often bother me, so please limit the beeping sounds if possible or remind me that ear plugs may help. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Busy and fast movements are difficult for me. Try not to rush me unless it is an emergency. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I can feel a lot of pain. How much pain I can handle may change quickly. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cluttered spaces and lots of people around me can make me anxious, so help me manage clutter in my space, and visitors if they are allowed. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I feel too hot or too cold. My preferred room temperature may change quickly. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a hard time swallowing some foods and drinks due to temperature, texture, spice, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> The feeling of water on my body and the smell of soap and lotions can be uncomfortable, making bathing hard even though I know it is important. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brushing my teeth can be very uncomfortable, painful, or make me gag. | |



4. Communication

You may have to communicate a little differently with me because: *(Check all that apply)*

- Sometimes I do not understand facial expressions and body language.
- Sometimes I see things you did not expect me to notice.
- I have some vision impairments: _____
- I have some hearing impairments: _____
- I can be very sensitive, and if I think you are angry or disappointed, I may mirror your feelings towards me.
- I do not always understand jokes or know that people are teasing.
- I cannot always transfer what I know to a new but similar situation.
- I understand better when you speak clearly with pauses.
- I appreciate it when you check if I understand.
- I have trouble understanding or remembering what is said to me. Sometimes people think I understand more than I do.
- It can be hard for me to explain what I am feeling or thinking.
- I can follow clear rules well and I appreciate lists, pictures, videos, and demonstrations.
- Other ways to help me understand important things: _____

5. Memory

Sometimes I have problems with my memory. I may need you to remind me and remain patient with me. For example: *(Check all that apply)*

- Sometimes I get things mixed up, and I worry more than I need to, but I do not do it on purpose.
- I do better with visual reminders. Things that help me are lists, instructions with pictures, and videos.
- I can often remember things very well, and other times my memory is not very good. Sometime people think I am lying about what I remember, but I am not.
- Other: _____

6. Anxiety and Stress

New experiences can make me feel anxious. You can help me by being calm and patient. For example: *(Check all that apply)*

- I may overthink and have a hard time stopping the idea I have in my head (i.e., my thoughts can get stuck).
- Sometimes my heart feels tight and I have panic attacks that scare me.
- My worry and stress often look like anger, and sometimes I have trouble controlling my emotions.
- Sometimes I get irritable and frustrated quickly. It helps to give me space, and to remain calm with me.
- Sometimes I worry about things that are not likely going to happen or have not happened as I thought they did.
- Sometimes I worry about things I remember happening to me, but other people don't remember it happening that way.
- Other: _____



7. Personal Safety and Relationships

Most of the time, I really like and trust most people. I want to be helpful and kind. Sometimes others may take advantage of me by: *(Check all that apply)*

- Living with me even though I do not want them to.
- Taking money or things from me even though I do not have very much.
- Eating my food and drinking my beverages.
- Convincing me to do things that I know I should not do.
- Yelling at me or hurting me emotionally and/or physically.
- Other _____

8. Financial

Managing my money can be challenging for me. Right now: *(Check all that apply)*

- I have a partner or spouse who works or helps to pay the bills.
- I live with my parents and they help to support me.
- I have trouble making ends meet at the end of the month.
- I have a paid job.
- I get support from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO).
- I get support from Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- I get support from Ontario Works (OT).
- Other _____

9. Housing *(Check all that apply)*

- I have safe housing with room for my new baby.
- I worry about where I am going to live.
- I would like some additional help to find safe housing with room for my growing family.



10. Postpartum Mental Health

I understand that it is normal to feel anxious about being a (new) parent and that asking for help is okay. I also know that because I have a complicated brain, I may be more likely to struggle with my mental or emotional health (e.g., postpartum depression or anxiety). Right now:
(Check all that apply)

- I feel good and confident in my parenting abilities.
- I struggle with adjusting to being a parent.
- I struggle with mental health or substance use issues.
- I have recently thought about suicide and/or hurting myself.

11. Postpartum and Parenting Support

I know, I can access a number of supports: *(Check all that apply)*

- My family is very supportive. My main support will come from: _____, and they can be reached at _____.
- I can learn more about parenting at an EarlyON Child and Family Centre. (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre>)
- I can learn about community supports from my local Public Health Unit. (<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>)
- I can get support for my mental health from the Canadian Mental Health Association. (<https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/are-you-in-crisis/>)
- I can get extra help and support when I am worried about my parenting ability from my local Children’s Aid Society or Indigenous Child and Family Well-being Agency. (<http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/>)
- I can learn about community supports from my local Indigenous Friendship Centre. (<https://ofifc.org/>)

If I am...	I show it by...	You can help me by...
Scared or worried		
In pain or uncomfortable		
Sad or lonely		
Angry or frustrated		

Some other things that you should know about me as I prepare to have my baby:



Other things I may need more support with and help to prepare for (e.g., emergency c-section, COVID-19 restrictions, if the baby needs help breathing, etc.):

MORE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS (TO-BE) AND CAREGIVERS

COVID-19

COVID-19 guidance: labour, delivery and newborn care

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_labour_delivery_newborn_guidance.pdf

How to feed an infant during COVID-19

<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/V04-E.pdf>

Information on planning for birth during the pandemic

<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/V02-E.pdf>

Labour support and recommendations during COVID-19

<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/V01-E.pdf>

Pandemic pregnancy guide for pregnant women to ask questions about COVID-19's effects on themselves and their babies through Instagram and Twitter: @PandemicPreg on Twitter

<https://www.obgyn.utoronto.ca/news/pandemic-pregnancy-guide-2020>

Pregnancy care guideline

<https://www.pcmch.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/COVID-19-Pregnancy-Care-Guideline-FINAL-1.pdf>

Maternal-neonatal COVID-19 general guideline

https://www.pcmch.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MatNeo-COVID-19-Guide_OCT222020.pdf

Recommendations when a baby is in the NICU during the pandemic

<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/V03-E.pdf>

Disability Supports

A cross-disability network for parents and prospective parents with disabilities in Toronto

<https://www.cilt.ca/programs-and-services/parenting-with-a-disability-network/>

HCARDD website

<https://www.porticonetwork.ca/web/hcardd>



Information about a person-centred approach to care

<https://ddprimarycare.surreyplace.ca/guidelines/general-health/person-centered-approach-to-care/>

Surrey Place Parenting Enhancement Program

<https://www.surreyplace.ca/programs-services-2/specialized-programs-and-services/>

FASD and alcohol exposure

Information about the impact of prenatal exposure to alcohol and FASD. This site includes a searchable directory of resources, events and services.

<https://www.fasinfotsaf.ca/en/>

Overlapping behavioural characteristic of FASD and related mental health diagnosis in children

<https://www.proofalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Overlapping-Characteristics-4-29-2016.pdf>

Mental health

Checklist for symptoms of depression or anxiety during pregnancy or postpartum

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/m07b-pregnancy-and-life-with-a-new-baby-bilingual-handout/>

Mental health screening tools, resources, and links to local services

<https://www.ementalhealth.ca/>

Parenting

A guide to postpartum

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/your-guide-to-postpartum/>

Breastfeeding guide

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b20e-my-breastfeeding-guide-booklet/>

Tips for parents on healthy brain development

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/k46e-tips-for-parents-brain-development-for-parents/>



Services in your community

Find an EarlyON Child and Family Centres

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre>

Indigenous Friendship Centres

<https://ofifc.org/>

Public health services in your community

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS in alphabetical order

Hilary Brown, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Society, University of Toronto Scarborough

Angela Geddes, CYW, BA (Psych), MSW, RSW

FASD Project Coordinator, Health Nexus

Meg Gemmill, MD, CCFP

Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine, Queen's University

Yona Lunsky, PhD, CPsych

Director, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto

Ullanda Niel, MD, CCFP, FCFP

Family Physician, Scarborough Center for Healthy Communities

Lesley A. Tarasoff, PhD

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Health and Society, University of Toronto

Scarborough Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. K., Cobigo, V., Lunsky, Y., & Vigod, S. (2019). Reproductive Health in Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Ontario: Implications for Policy and Practice. *Healthcare Quarterly*, 21(4), 6–9.
- Brown, H. K., Lunsky, Y., Wilton, A. S., Cobigo, V., & Vigod, S. N. (2016). Pregnancy in Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada*, 38(1), 9–16.
- Geddes, A. (2015). *FASD: Moving Toward Sustainable Assessment and Support Services in Ontario* (McMaster University). Retrieved from <https://zone.biblio.laurentian.ca/handle/10219/2517>
- Government of Ontario. (2020). *Ontario Strengthening Supports for Children and Youth Impacted by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder*. Retrieved from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58311/ontario-strengthening-supports-for-children-and-youth-impacted-by-fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder#>
- Harding, K., Flannigan, K., Mcfarlane, A., Reid, D., & Wilson, M. (2020). Parenting with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Needs, Challenges, and Opportunities for Support and Research. *CanFASD*, (November), 1–7. Retrieved from <https://canfasd.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/Parenting-Issue-Paper-Final.pdf>
- Maternal Newborn Child & Youth Strategic Clinical Network. (2020). Alberta Antenatal Pathway. *Maternal Newborn Child and Youth SCN*, pp. 1–116. Retrieved from <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/scn/ahs-scnc-antenatal-pathway.pdf>
- Mei-Dan, E., Ray, J. G., & Vigod, S. N. (2015). Perinatal Outcomes Among Women with Bipolar Disorder: A Population-Based Cohort Study. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 212(3), 1-8.
- Popova, S., Lange, S., Shield, K., Mihic, A., Chudley, A. E., Mukherjee, R. A. S., ... Rehm, J. (2016). Comorbidity of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *The Lancet*, 387(10022), 978–987.



Sullivan, W. F., Diepstra, H., Heng, J., Ally, S., Bradley, E., Casson, I., ... Witherbee, S. (2018). Primary Care of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: 2018 Canadian Consensus Guidelines. *Canadian Family Physician*, 64, 254–279.

Surrey Place. (2020). *COVID-19 Hospital Transfer Form for Patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://ddprimarycare.surreyplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Hospital-Transfer-Form-for-Patient-with-IDD.pdf>

Xie, E., & Gemmill, M. (2018). Exploring the Prenatal Experience of Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in a Southeastern Ontario Family Health Team. *Canadian Family Physician*, 64(Suppl 2), S70–S75.