FASD United | Policy Position Statements

1. Education

Short description

Students with FASD deserve educational opportunities that recognize their strengths and support their individual learning needs. FASD United advocates for FASD-informed instruction, accommodations, educator training, stronger recognition of FASD in special education policy, and access to educational and vocational opportunities across the lifespan.

Our Position

Every student with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) deserves an education that recognizes their strengths, understands their individual learning needs, and provides the support necessary to succeed. FASD is a common, lifelong, often non-apparent disability that can affect learning, memory, attention, executive functioning, and behavior. FASD-informed educational strategies, individualized accommodations, and appropriate support services can improve educational experiences and outcomes. Schools must recognize that students with FASD may learn and respond differently and adapt educational environments to meet their needs.

Access to FASD-informed education should extend across the lifespan, from early childhood through elementary and secondary education, post-secondary education, vocational training, and adult learning. Federal and state policies must strengthen recognition of FASD within education and disability systems, expand professional training, and ensure that students can access appropriate support based on their individual needs. Explicit recognition of FASD within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an important legislative goal, alongside improving the implementation of existing educational protections and services.

Our Policy Goals

1. Ensure access to individualized, FASD-informed educational support.

Students with FASD should have access to appropriate educational services, individualized education programs (IEPs) when eligible, accommodation plans, and classroom strategies that reflect their strengths and needs. Schools should evaluate students based on their educational needs and applicable eligibility criteria rather than requiring a formal FASD diagnosis before considering appropriate support.

2. Strengthen recognition of FASD within special education policy.

Pursue explicit recognition of FASD within IDEA while improving access to appropriate educational services under existing federal and state law. Students with FASD may already qualify for special education through existing IDEA disability categories, but greater recognition of FASD can help schools identify learning needs and provide appropriate accommodations and support.

3. Expand FASD training for educators and school personnel.

Increase access to evidence-based, FASD-informed training for teachers, administrators, school psychologists, paraprofessionals, and other education professionals. Training should include

practical approaches to instruction, classroom environments, sensory needs, executive functioning, and disability-related behavior.

4. Strengthen collaboration among students, families, schools, and service providers.

Promote meaningful participation by students with FASD and their families in educational planning and decision-making. Improve coordination between education, healthcare, diagnostic, and disability service systems to help students access appropriate support.

5. Expand transition planning and lifelong educational opportunities.

Strengthen individualized transition planning and access to postsecondary education, vocational training, and workforce preparation for students with FASD. Educational and training opportunities should remain accessible throughout adulthood, with appropriate accommodations and supports.

Alignment with Community-Driven Policy Recommendations

The FASD Symposium, held each year during National FASD Impact Week, brings together individuals with FASD, families, professionals, researchers, and agency representatives as Contributors to review and update the recommendations of the 2009 National FASD Task Force report, A Call to Action. The resulting FASD Symposium White Papers reflect the FASD community's own priorities for progress in the field. The following community-driven recommendations align with this position:

- **Continuum of Care:** Expand coordinated, evidence-based interventions and supports across the lifespan, including education, vocational opportunities, and job training.
- **Professional Education:** Strengthen standardized FASD education and training across professional systems, incorporating the knowledge and experiences of people with FASD and their families.
- **Diagnosis and Screening:** Improve identification and access to diagnosis, helping individuals better understand their needs and connect with appropriate educational and other support services.

FASD Respect Act Alignment

The FASD Respect Act was enacted as Section 104 of the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025. The law authorizes a comprehensive federal FASD program encompassing education, identification, intervention, and service delivery.

Section 399H specifically includes educational activities for educators, counselors, and other service providers, as well as strategies to coordinate information and services among agencies involved in education and vocational training. It also authorizes activities to strengthen state and Tribal capacity to identify and support individuals with FASD.

These provisions provide opportunities to improve FASD awareness, professional training, and coordination across education and related service systems. Their implementation depends on federal program decisions and available funding.

Section 104 does not amend IDEA, establish a separate FASD eligibility category under federal special education law, or guarantee FASD-specific educational accommodations. Achieving these broader education policy goals requires additional federal and state action alongside implementation of the enacted Respect Act provisions.

Further Reading and References

- FASD United, FASD White Papers and Community Recommendations: https://fasdunited.org/the-fasd-white-paper-symposium/
- FASD United, FASD Language and Stigma Guide.
- SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025, Public Law 119-44, Section 104: https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ44/PLAW-119publ44.pdf
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): https://sites.ed.gov/idea/
- U.S. Department of Education, 34 CFR § 300.8, Child with a disability: https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.8
- U.S. Department of Education, Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children With Disabilities: Final Regulations: https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/finalregulations.pdf