4. Training for Professionals and Caregivers

Short description

FASD-informed professionals and caregivers are essential to effective support across the lifespan. FASD United advocates for practical, evidence-informed training in healthcare, education, disability services, child welfare, justice, and other systems, with people with FASD and families helping shape how that training is developed and delivered.

Our Position

People with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) interact with many systems throughout their lives, yet the professionals serving them may have limited education about FASD and its effects. When FASD is overlooked or misunderstood, individuals and families can encounter inappropriate expectations, ineffective interventions, and unnecessary barriers to services. FASD-informed training can help professionals recognize individual strengths and support needs and respond more effectively.

FASD United supports accessible, evidence-informed education for professionals, caregivers, and others who support people with FASD. Training should extend beyond basic awareness to practical approaches that improve everyday services, relationships, and outcomes. It should also incorporate the perspectives of people with FASD and families, recognize differences across the lifespan, and address stigma and misconceptions.

Our Policy Goals

1. Integrate FASD education into professional preparation and continuing training.

Expand FASD content in relevant degree programs, professional education, licensing-related training where appropriate, and continuing education. Priority systems include healthcare, education, behavioral health, disability services, child welfare, and justice.

2. Promote practical, evidence-informed training.

Ensure that training addresses identification, communication, accommodations, environmental modifications, individualized support, and effective referral practices. Training should equip professionals to apply knowledge in their own settings.

3. Strengthen training for families and caregivers.

Improve access to practical information, coaching, peer support, and other educational resources for parents, caregivers, and family members supporting people with FASD at different life stages.

4. Include people with FASD and families in training development.

Promote meaningful participation by people with living and lived experience in the design, delivery, and evaluation of training programs. Ensure that training uses respectful, strengths-based language and reflects a range of experiences.

5. Improve access to training across communities and systems.

Support training opportunities for rural and underserved communities, Tribal programs, and organizations with limited resources. Encourage coordination and evaluation to improve the consistency and usefulness of available training.

Alignment with Community-Driven Policy Recommendations

The following community-driven recommendations align with this position:

- **Professional Education:** Strengthen standardized FASD curricula across service systems and incorporate the perspectives of people with FASD and their families.
- **Agency Collaboration:** Encourage coordinated professional development and consistent approaches across agencies.
- **Continuum of Care:** Equip professionals and caregivers to provide appropriate support at different life stages.
- **Diagnosis and Screening:** Improve recognition of FASD and appropriate referral practices through professional education.

FASD Respect Act Alignment

Section 104 of the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025 authorizes FASD education, training, technical assistance, and dissemination activities. Section 399H addresses professional education and capacity building, while Section 399I authorizes activities to increase awareness of screening tools and interventions, provide technical assistance, and make information and resources available.

These provisions can support the development and dissemination of FASD-informed training. They do not independently establish mandatory FASD training or licensing requirements for all professional disciplines. Broader adoption will require action by educational institutions, professional organizations, agencies, and policymakers.

Further Reading and References

- FASD United, Language and Stigma Guide.
- FASD United, FASD Symposium White Paper 1.1 and White Paper 1.2.
- 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