

# FASD in Arizona 2008

Report by Teresa Kellerman

Fetal Alcohol Resource Center - [www.fasarizona.com](http://www.fasarizona.com)

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are a serious threat to the health and economy of Arizona.

There were 103,803 babies born in Arizona last year.(1) The latest annual report from the Arizona Department of Health states that there were 4 cases of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) recorded.(2) Because of the stigma attached to Fetal Alcohol, less than 1% of new mothers in Arizona *report* that they drank during pregnancy.(3)

About half of all women of childbearing age in the United States drink alcohol regularly, and about half of those female drinkers engage in binge drinking. (4)

About half of all pregnancies are unplanned, meaning the mother does not expect to be pregnant, and may not know she is pregnant during the first several weeks, when organs are forming and the brain is beginning to develop. Of pregnant women in their first trimester, 22% report having consumed alcohol in the past month. (4)

Out of the 103,803 babies born in Arizona last year, it is estimated that 12.4% - more than 12,000 of these babies - were born to mothers who engaged in binge drinking during pregnancy. (6) These babies are at risk of significant brain damage that could result in permanent disabilities and lifelong difficulties.

Government research indicates the rate of FASD to be one out of every 100 births.(5) This means that more than 1,000 babies are born each year in Arizona with a diagnosable fetal alcohol disorder.

FAS prevalence expert Larry Burd estimates that in the state of Arizona approximately 60,000 individuals are living with a significant degree of FASD, and that at least 6,000 may have full FAS. (7)

Alcohol causes more damage to the developing baby's brain than any other substance. In fact, alcohol is the leading cause of preventable birth defects and cognitive disabilities. However, only 15% of those with a diagnosable fetal alcohol disorder actually have an IQ low enough to qualify for services in the division of developmental disabilities. (8) A majority of those affected do not receive adequate, appropriate support services and become lost in the system at great cost to individuals, their families, and the community.

The cost to Arizona taxpayers is estimated to be \$98 million every year. (9) Annual costs just for Special Education and Juvenile Justice in Arizona due to FASD each year is approximately \$27 million. (9) The lifetime costs for one child with FAS is \$516,000. If a prevention program that costs \$516,000 prevents just one case of FAS, it would be cost effective. (9)

1. Advance Vital Statistics, Arizona, 2007. Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Public Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Section.

2. Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics 2006 report "Natality: Maternal Characteristics and Newborn's Health" 1B28

3. Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics 2006 report "Natality: Maternal Characteristics and Newborn's Health" 1B26

4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2004). *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-25, DHHS Publication No. SMA 04-3964). Rockville, MD.

5. *Teratology* 1997 Nov;56[5]:317-26

6. "Alcohol consumption among women who are pregnant or who might become pregnant- United States, 2002." *MMWR Morb Wkly Rep* 2004;53(50):1178-81

7. Prevalence and Cost Calculator, 2003, Larry Burd, Ph.D., Director, North Dakota Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Center.

8. Streissguth, A.P., Barr, H.M., Kogan, J. & Bookstein, F. L., "Understanding the Occurrence of Secondary Disabilities in Clients with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)," Final Report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), August, 1996, Seattle: University of Washington, Fetal Alcohol & Drug Unit, Tech. Rep. No. 96-06, (1996).

9. SAMHSA FASD Center for Excellence economics expert Henrick Harwood at Women's Summit June 2004.