

FASD in Arizona 2005

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are a serious threat to the health and economy of Arizona. There were 93,843 babies born in Arizona last year. (1) The latest annual report from the Arizona Department of Health states that there were no cases of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) recorded. (2) Because of the stigma attached to FAS, 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) Of women in their peak childbearing years, from age 18-25, the rate of drinking is 63% and the rate of binge drinking is 34%. The rate of alcohol consumption in Arizona is about the same as the national average. (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, 23% report having consumed alcohol in the past month. (4)

Out of the 93,843 babies born in Arizona last year, it is estimated that 12.4% - more than 11,000 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.

Ann Streissguth's research in Washington State indicates a rate of one case of FASD out of every 100 births. (5) If we apply this rate to Arizona, this would mean about 900 babies are born each year in Arizona with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, or FASD. Of these, about 180 are born with full FAS. In one year.

The population of the state of Arizona as of last year's census was 5.4 million people. It is estimated that one out of 100 babies are born with significant but often invisible disabilities due to prenatal exposure to alcohol. FAS prevalence expert Larry Burd estimates that in the state of Arizona, approximately 50,000 individuals are living with a significant degree of FASD, and that 5,000 probably have full FAS. (7) According to Streissguth's studies, about 25% of those with full FAS have an IQ under 70. That means that 75% have an IQ in the normal range. Only 9% of those with Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) have an IQ under 70. Of all those with FAS and FAE, only 16% have an IQ low enough to qualify for DD services (DD stands for developmental disabilities). Still, that amounts to about 8,000 persons in the state of Arizona with FASD who could qualify for DD services. But the Division of Developmental Disabilities has on their records only 80 consumers who are identified as having a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. 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 almost \$100 million every year. (8)

1. Advance Vital Statistics, Arizona, 2004. Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Public Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Section by Christopher K. Mrela, Ph.D., Assistant Registrar of Vital Statistics, Trentham Coe, Senior Research Data Analyst, p 3

2. Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics 2003, Table 5B-28.

3. Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics 2003, Table 1B-24.

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