

**Fetal Alcohol  
Spectrum Disorders (FASD):  
A Practical Guide for Employers**



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University of Wisconsin  
Department of Family Medicine  
2006  
[www.fammed.wisc.edu/fen](http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/fen)*

## Dear Employer,

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet and to learn more about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). FASD is an umbrella term used to describe the range of physical, cognitive and behavioral effects caused by alcohol use during pregnancy. Alcohol can affect the fetus in many ways depending on the timing of exposure and the dose. Alcohol's effects are permanent but research shows that with early identification and appropriate interventions, healthy positive outcomes can occur.

The central nervous system (CNS) deficits associated with these conditions include poor fine and gross motor coordination and a range of cognitive disabilities including learning disabilities and mental retardation, speech and language deficits, memory and processing problems, and attention problems. These deficits often make it difficult for an individual to obtain and maintain employment without some worksite accommodations.

This booklet provides practical tips for employers to help the worker with FASD.

## Other Notes:



## Notes:

Worker's Strengths:

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Worker's Challenges:

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Worker responds best when:

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## Worksite Accommodations

There are several basic concepts to consider to best assist a worker with FASD. Most of the accommodations are no cost or low-cost.

- Environmental Characteristics
- Employee Characteristics
- Training and Supervision Needs

To determine which accommodations will be the most useful, it is best to start with an assessment that takes into account characteristics of both the worker and the environment. A vocational counselor can complete this. If none is available, there are many resources that can be of assistance. A good place to start is the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).



**The following are some areas to consider when assessing a work environment:**

#### **TRANSPORTATION TO WORKSITE**

- Bus
- Cab
- Carpool
- Walk
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

\*Is this transportation available during all hours the employee may be working?

#### **PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS OF JOB**

- Length of workday
- Lifting \_\_\_\_\_ (max.)
- Carrying \_\_\_\_\_ (weight) \_\_\_\_\_ (distance)
- Standing \_\_\_\_\_ (max. percentage per day)
- Squatting/bending
- Sitting \_\_\_\_\_ (max. percentage per day)
- Walking \_\_\_\_\_ (approx. distance per day)
- Pushing/pulling
  - Object to be pushed/pulled \_\_\_\_\_
  - Weight \_\_\_\_\_ (max.)
- Use of chemicals
  - Yes    No
- Use of water
  - Yes    Hot    Cold    No Use of Water

#### **Employee Characteristics:**

Consider the characteristics of the worker that may include cognitive limitations (including memory and information processing, making choices, etc). In addition to learning difficulties, the worker may have difficulty with social interactions (i.e., picking up on social cues).

These characteristics will be better defined by an ecological assessment. If none is available, talk to the employee and to individuals who know the employee (such as parents, teachers, or case workers). They can help define the individual's strengths and weaknesses.

#### **Training and Supervision Needs:**

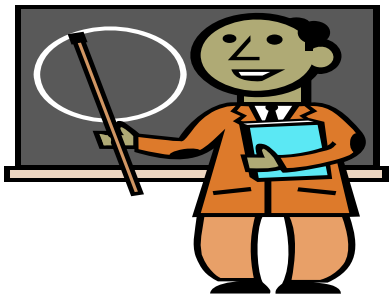
To assist in training of specific job duties, some good goals would be to:

- Break down job duties
- Develop memory strategies for individual job duties
- Use concrete language
- Use picture cues

## Environmental Characteristics:

Consider the physical and personnel characteristics in the work setting. A good goal would be to arrange for the following:

- Organized, safe physical environment
  - Monitor heat, ventilation, noise levels, distance and route to safety exits
  - Well-defined work areas that remain constant
  - Consistent routines
  - Small number of people in immediate work group
  - Excess "clutter" well hidden
- Consistency in staffing
- Frequent, short breaks



## ALLERGENS/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

### Allergens

Yes       No

Identified Allergen(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Hazardous Materials

Yes       No

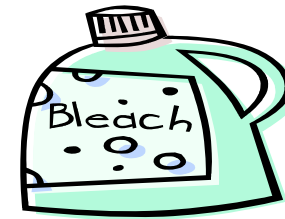
Identified Material(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Appropriate storage

Yes       No



## Assessing Vocational Settings for Individuals with FASD

Environmental aspects of any vocational setting can present major barriers to the success of an individual with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. The following is a checklist of elements for consideration and accommodation. This is not intended to be an all-inclusive list, but rather a starting point and frame for developing necessary accommodations.

### NOISE

#### Interior

Level \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Medium \_\_\_ High

- Machinery
- Background
- Radio/piped music
- Air conditioner/fan
- Windows
- Proximity to elevator, break room, vending machines
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Exterior

Level \_\_\_ Low \_\_\_ Medium \_\_\_ High

- Traffic
- Site-specific: fire station/police station, hospital, airport
- Construction
- Proximity to severe weather warning system
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### TEMPERATURE

- Air conditioner/fan
- Heat (dry heat, radiator)
- Ventilation
  - Windows
- Exposure to sun (N, S, W, E)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### WORK STATION

- Well-defined
- Desk
- Chair
- Computer
- Clutter
- Storage
- Physical arrangement
- Proximity to exit, elevator, stairs
- Proximity to co-workers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### ACCESSIBILITY

#### Interior

- Flooring (tile, carpet, linoleum, wood)
- Proximity to exit
- Proximity to emergency exit
- Elevator, stairs
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Exterior

- Curb cuts
- Distance from transportation (parking lot, bus, subway, etc.)
- Stairs