

# Let's Talk

## A GUIDE FOR PARTNERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY

### How you can help prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) are developmental disabilities caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. Preventing FASDs takes more than just telling women not to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Here are some ways everyone can help support healthy pregnancies:**

#### KNOW THE FACTS

Women hear conflicting information about alcohol use and pregnancy from many sources — including from medical providers. You can help clear up confusion by spreading the word that there is no known amount, type or time that is safe to drink alcohol while pregnant. Learn more at **LetsTalkFASDak.org**.

#### TAKE A 'PREGNANT PAUSE'

If your partner, friend, sister or any other woman you know is pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, you can support and encourage their choice not to drink by remaining alcohol-free as well.

#### BE A GOOD HOST

Offer 'mocktails' and other non-alcoholic drinks during social events and never pressure anyone, pregnant or not, to drink. Some women have a hard time saying no in certain social situations and may continue drinking alcohol even if they suspect they might be pregnant or if they have not yet told others about their pregnancy.

#### REDUCE RISKY DRINKING

Our drinking habits are influenced by the people around us. Support a culture of moderation by being aware of how much alcohol you consume and how it may harm you and others. To learn more about at-risk drinking habits and find low-risk guidelines, visit **rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov**.

#### CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

Avoid criticizing women who drink during pregnancy. There is a stigma associated with having a baby born with FASDs and a common misconception is that it is only a problem for certain types of women. Not only is this inaccurate — any woman who drinks any amount of alcohol at any point in her pregnancy is at risk — shaming mothers of children with FASDs creates an environment where women are not willing to have honest conversations about their alcohol use and reproductive health out of fear of being judged.

#### ADVOCATE FOR ALL THE THINGS

There are many factors that affect a woman's decision to drink during pregnancy. Violence and discrimination against women, mental and behavioral health — including substance abuse and addiction — and access to education and community-based services all play a role long before a woman becomes pregnant. You can help reduce risk factors in your community by supporting and advocating for access to services, and speaking out against all forms of violence, degrading language and discrimination against women.

#### HAVE A PLAN

Almost half of all pregnancies are unplanned. Take ownership of your personal reproductive health decisions and have honest conversations with your partner about both of your plans to determine what is right for your relationship. And be sure to make your alcohol use and the risks of FASDs part of the discussion when planning for pregnancy.

*This information sheet was adapted by Let's Talk FASD Alaska from information sheets created by the Canada FASD Research Network Action Team and adapted by the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Behavioral Health Research and Services.*

Find useful tips to support your partner at **LetsTalkFASDak.org**



