

**MIYKIWAN TOOLKIT  
FACT SHEET**

**ISSUES  
AFFECTING  
VIOLENCE**

**WHAT IS ....**

There are issues in people's lives which can act as a cause and effect with family violence. These include: alcohol & drug addiction; lack of employment & housing; gang involvement; poverty; mental illness; and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The violence may come from the affected person or it may be directed at them.

This fact sheet specifically addresses two issues, mental illness and FASD, in the context of family violence.



*Although the effects of both Mental Illness and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder have been seen by those suffering from its effects as a social stigma or burden, it is recommended that the best solution is to seek help and support early on.*

**KEY THINGS TO KNOW**

- 110,690 Aboriginal persons stated that they had a long-term mental health issue or chronic mood disorder (2012)
- In 2001, 14% of Aboriginal people living off-reserve consulted a health professional about their mental or emotional health
- Exposure to family violence has been recognized as one of the causes for suicide amongst Aboriginal people
- 22.6% of off-reserve Aboriginal people, aged 15 years or older, considered themselves to be heavy drinkers as opposed to 16.1% of non-Aboriginal people (2000-2001)
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) can occur in a person who was exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. Effects from FASD can include physical, mental, behavioural difficulties, and learning disabilities
- Regarding FASD, 17.8% of Aboriginal females aged 12 to 24 reported having 5 or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion, at least once a month in the past year; 11.9% of Aboriginal females aged 25 to 44 years reported doing so (2013)
- A common myth is that FASD is associated with a social, ethnic or cultural background

## CAUSES & FORMS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

The actual causes for mental illness can be both complex and linked together. Contributing factors can include:

- A person's genetics biology or personality
- A person's socio-economic status or life-altering events, in particular those which have affected Aboriginal people throughout a number of generations including colonization, the Indian Act, the residential school system and the 60's Scoop

While there are several forms of mental illness, the most cited are:

- Mood disorders including depression and bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia, anxiety, personality or eating disorders
- Though suicide is not considered a mental illness, it sometimes can be the result of an underlying mental illness

## SIGNS OF FASD

Here are some of the more well-known signs of FASD:

- Difficulty with judging, planning, consequences, organization, impulsivity, memory, delays any gratification
- Communication – although they may be highly verbal, the person may lack written and verbal comprehension skills
- Person may have impaired balance and coordination
- Person may experience difficulties with such pain, touch, heat, light

## STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS

- For more information on Aboriginal mental health support programs near you, visit the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research at: <http://www.namhr.ca/mental-health-programs/>
- For more information and help on FASD, you can contact the Canada FASD Research Network at: [info@canfasd.ca](mailto:info@canfasd.ca) or <http://www.canfasd.ca/>

## IF YOUR CHILD HAS FASD:

- Try and remember that you are human. There are many challenges in being a parent or family caregiver to a child with FASD. Such challenges can cause frustration, disappointment, anger or sadness. These feelings are a normal part of everyday life. You do not have to feel guilty about your emotions
- Find someone you can trust to talk to. Parenting a child with FASD can be very stressful on you and your family
- Get help and support from your local Mental Health office, Elder or Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- If you feel that there should be a changes made in your child's situation, remember to change the environment and not your child
- Look for strengths. Every child has special strengths and abilities that deserve to be celebrated.

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If you need help or someone to talk to please contact the National Office for Victims Services Center, toll free at: **1-866-525-0554** or Kids Help Phone, toll free at: 1-800-668-6868, [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

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To obtain more information regarding the CAP Family Violence Prevention Awareness Toolkit, please contact the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples at [www.abo-peoples.org](http://www.abo-peoples.org) or call 1-613-747-6022.

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