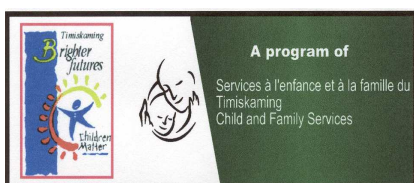


FASD Ontario Camp Experience 2007



FASD Ontario Stakeholders
Intervention and Supports Working Group



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Forward

For a second year, Ontario children affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and their families/caregivers were provided with the opportunity to attend an informative camp experience. The event, offering both educational workshops as well as fun family activities, was held at YMCA Geneva Park, (near Orillia, ON) from March 16th to 18th, 2007. The camp was a project developed and executed by the Intervention and Support Working Group of the FASD Stakeholders for Ontario (FASD Ontario).

FASD Ontario is a province wide group of parents, caregivers, service providers concerned with FASD, whose funding is provided primarily by the Public Health Agency of Canada. A special thanks goes out to all those involved:

"I finally have friends, and they are just like me" Child affected with FASD
"This weekend has changed our lives forever, it is not that he does not want to do it, it is because he CANNOT do it" Parent

Members of the Intervention and Supports Working Group include:

- *Mary Cunningham* (FASD Ontario Lead), FASD Advocate/Educator, Kitchener
- *Sharron Richards*, Manager of Community Development & Prevention Program, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- *Jennifer Sells*, Program Manager for Community and Prevention Programs, Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services in Owen Sound
- *Pat Spadetto* (Camp Lead), Manager of Early Childhood and Parental Supports, Timiskaming Brighter Futures
- *Laura Spero*, Fetal Alcohol Prevention and Awareness Educator, Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre, London
- *Yvette Nechvatal-Drew*, Executive Director, Girls Incorporated of Durham
- *Jennifer Corbiere*, Policy Analyst, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Toronto

Other individuals involved in the planning of the camp include:

Mary and Mike Margo, Parents
Trevor and Lisa Arthey, Parents
Greg Flynn, Toronto Native Child and Family Services
Kim Meawasige, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers

FASD Volunteers/Staff

Kim Delanardo, Timiskaming Child and Family Services

Julia Spadetto, Thames Valley District School Board
Robert Wilkinson, Native Child and Family Services
Alex Jacobs, Elder
Tracy Ryan, Timiskaming Child and Family Services
Caleidgh McRae, University Student
Julia Parisheva-Fort, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Sonya Moore, PHN Middlesex-London Health Unit
Stacey McIntaggart, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Stephanie Ambert, Child Development Institute, Toronto
Danielle Leger, College Student
Joanne Kakaquayash, Elder
Natasha Eli, Toronto Native Child and Family Services
Janet McShane, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Melissa Vres, Children's Aid Society of Toronto
Chris Margetson, Senior FASD Consultant
Sue Paquette, Parent
YMCA Camp Leaders

(some volunteers/staff missing from these pictures)



Background

The purpose of the FASD Intervention and Support Working Group is “to focus on building capacity required by individuals and groups providing care and support, services and advocacy to individuals with FASD.”(FASD Stakeholders for Ontario March 30, 2005). Priorities set out by the group include: to increase knowledge for individuals and groups addressing FASD; to increase FASD expertise by integrating effective practices; to support families and caregivers of individuals with FASD; and provide support and services for individuals affected with FASD.

FASD Camp Experience 2007 provided an avenue to address these goals. A major priority of the camp was the support of families with members who have FASD, or are suspected of having FASD, in an integrated fashion. To accomplish this, the focus was on practices that related to diagnosis, intervention and on-going care to decrease secondary disabilities and misunderstandings associated with FASD. In providing this camp experience we also reached the goal of building capacity among the many service providers/staff/volunteers that received training and first hand knowledge of working with children with FASD.

In addition, the FASD Camp Experience 2007 was expected to accomplish several other tasks for adults and for children. It was intended that the adults attending the camp would experience a reduction in stress and isolation, as well as an increase in their knowledge in order to better care for their children affected by FASD. For the children, the camp was designed to reduce their isolation by introducing them to other children affected by FASD, as well as increase their understanding and appreciation of their disability or that of their sibling/s. In providing this camp we also wanted to kindle some hope within the families through better understanding and appreciation for their children.

Camper Statistics

Application forms for the camp were distributed through various service providers such as Children's Aid Societies, Children's Mental Health Centers, Community Action for Children and Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Projects, FASD Parent Support Groups, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers, School Boards etcetera throughout Ontario in mid December 2006.

There were 63 families, totaling 265 people, who submitted their applications for the camp prior to the established deadline of January 31, 2007. Due to financial restrictions, not all applicants were able to attend. Priority was given to families that did not attend the FASD Camp experience offered in 2006. After this factor was considered, applications were considered in order of submission, with earliest arriving applications having priority as well as ensuring that each region of the province was represented. It may be of interest to some that we had calls from outside of the province from service providers interested in sending families and/or wanting more information to bring forward to their funders.

In the end, a total of 197 individual campers from 47 families were able to attend the 2007 camp. Data pertaining to camper age, location and FASD-affectedness is broken down and summarized in the two tables below.

Table 1: Summary of origin of campers attending the FASD Camp Experience 2007 at YMCA Geneva Park, displaying the number of families from the various regions of Ontario, as well as the number of individuals from the region.

Region	Number of Families	Number of Individuals
Northwest	4	12
Northeast	2	13
Central	25	105
Southeast	5	18
Southwest	11	49
Total	47	197

Table 2: Analysis of the chronological age classification of all campers at the FASD Camp Experience 2007; including analysis of the FASD-affectedness of the persons.

Age Category		FASD Affected	
Adult	82	Yes	2
		No	80
Child	115	Yes	81
		No	34
Total	197	Total	197

Contributions and Costs

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provided the primary funding for this project through a contribution to Timiskaming Brighter Futures, a program of Timiskaming Child and Family Services. The project Lead was Pat Spadetto, Manager of Early Childhood and Parental Support at Timiskaming Child and Family Services in Kirkland Lake, Ontario.

The contribution of \$50,000 provided the funding basis for the camp, while another contribution of \$9,000 was made to Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services in Owen Sound by the PHAC. SickKids also provided a total of \$1,439 in funding for three families attending from the Toronto area. Total available funding was \$60,439.

Funding was also provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada for the aboriginal components of our programming to the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers. Programming for the Aboriginal program components were provided through Greg Flynn from Toronto Native Child and Family Services.

The following amounts do not include expenses or funding for the aboriginal component. Expenses consisted of \$63,173 Allocation was as follows:

- YMCA Camp leadership/Accommodations/Meals: \$42, 204
- Travel: \$ 7,119
- Administration/Bookkeeping: \$ 8,000
- Materials: \$ 5,850

Due to last minute accommodations/meals for volunteers/staff we were over budget by approximately \$2,700, which was paid within the regular budget of Timiskaming Brighter Futures, funded primarily through the Community Action Program for Children and Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program.

Because of the limited budget of the camp, donations were sought from various organizations across Ontario. Donations are summarized in Table 3, below.

Table 3: Summary of the donations made to the FASD Camp Experience 2007, including the name of the company and what was donated.

Company Name	Donation
3M Canada Inc.	Removable Notes, Scotch Tape, Character Bandages for the children (Winnie the Pooh, bugs, and Herbie were featured)
Scholar's Choice	Puzzle, game, crayons, and two colouring books
Timiskaming Child and Family Services	Pens, notepads, key lights, mugs T-Shirts were provided for volunteers
Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre	Pens

The Public Health Agency of Canada also donated a number of items to the camp. Several books and information pieces were provided; they were distributed to the campers, and are listed below.

- *The Golden Hoop of Life: A Community of Hope* by Allan Mountford
- *Damaged Angels* by Bonnie Buxton
- *Let's Talk FASD* by VON Canada

Upon arrival and registration each family received a cloth bag printed with the colourful FASD camp logo. Each bag included the donated items as well as:

- a map of YMCA Geneva Park,
- an agenda of the activities for the weekend,
- an evaluation to be completed at the end of the weekend,
- nametags for the adults,
- wristbands for the children,
- identification cards for each children,
- a newsletter, highlighting important information about the weekend,
- a Parent and Caregiver resource package put together by Mary Cunningham
- a FASlink CD,
- a video "Different Directions: Understanding FASD" from Ontario's North for the Children.

Each person at the camp also received a t-shirt; the shirts were printed with the FASD logo on it. In order for campers to be easily able to distinguish between other campers and the volunteers, all volunteers had green shirts, while campers wore white and the Geneva Park Camp Leadership Counselors wore red.

As a token of gratitude, all volunteers and organizers received a small gift. The gift included a Timiskaming Child and Family Services T-shirt, pen, notepad, mug and key light, a pen from SOAHAC, *Let's Talk FASD* by VON Canada, *The Golden Hoop of Life: A Community of Hope* by Allan Mountford, and *Damaged Angels* by Bonnie Buxton.

Planning and Implementation Process

Planning of the camp began in November through teleconferences and email. With committee members spread across the province, these were the most convenient ways to communicate. With one successful year under our belt, the committee asked two families from the 2006 Camp Experience to participate in the planning for March 2007. We also asked another parent to assist as the Master of Ceremonies.

Health Canada assisted with the teleconferences, which were used as the main method of communication. The teleconferences were planned every 2-3 weeks in 2006, and increased in frequency to weekly as the camp date, March 2007, approached. Minutes of these teleconferences were circulated to all members, ensuring everyone was kept up to date.

Members of the planning committee also have other full time workload commitments and it was sometimes difficult to have everyone available for the teleconferences. With FASD just on the outer edge of the radar for most Ministries and funding bodies, most FASD advocacy, education and support becomes an additional priority for those dedicated individuals who are attempting to push this agenda forward. It is our hope that projects; such as the FASD Camp Experience 2007; will demand the attention of Ministries and heighten their responsiveness to the issue with dedicated funding to assist families living with the affects of FASD.

Location and Programming

The 2007 camp was held at the YMCA Geneva Park near Orillia, Ontario; the facility was used for the 2006 camp as well. It is a 90-minute drive North of Toronto on Lake Couchiching. YMCA Geneva Park provides on site accommodations and meals, as well as offering numerous indoor and outdoor activities.

Website: <http://www.genevapark.ymca.ca/home.html>

The programming for the children was organized by the Geneva Park staff, and the committee organized the adult programming, as well as the family workshops. The adult and children's programming was designed to run concurrently to ensure that all campers were participating in age-appropriate structured events throughout the weekend. Geneva Park Staff were very understanding of the dietary needs of the children attending and meals were designed according to sensitivities of those in attendance.

Program Details

Because of the diverse group of people attending the camp, a variety of activities and workshops were organized over the weekend. Details regarding the programming events of the weekend are displayed below. A complete program agenda can be found in Appendices of this report.

Family Campfire

The main event planned on the first evening of the camp was a campfire for all of the families, staff and volunteers to attend. The campfire took place in a small

parking lot on the YMCA Geneva Park grounds. Organized and run by the Geneva Park staff, the campfire allowed the families to enjoy song, skits, and stories around a small fire.



Staff Training

After YMCA staff provided the lead for the campfire; the park staff and volunteers received a training and information session regarding FASD. Although many of the volunteers had experience working with children affected by FASD, some of the YMCA staff did not. YMCA staff consisted of teachers, early childhood educators, university students and experienced camp counsellors. The information session provided everyone an opportunity to discuss what to expect over the weekend, and how to try differently within their problem solving strategies for those situations that were probable within the next few days. Training was lead by Kim Meawasige, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers; along with the committee members and two youth living with the affects of FASD.

Training included a demonstration of how over-stimulated FASD children can become in everyday settings. Florescent lighting, normal background noise, classmates whispering, teachers giving instructions and attempts to concentrate on their own work become overwhelming for children with FASD. The demonstration was provided to assist staff/volunteers with an understanding of how an FASD affected child would feel in normal situations.

Along with Video excerpts on FASD, direction was given on specific strategies like making instructions easier to follow by breaking down the process into smaller steps and decreasing the details, which in turn will make the directions easier to follow. Reaction to pain is another cause for concern with children affected by FASD, leaders were made aware that just because a child may say an injury does not hurt, does not mean that they are not hurt – it may mean that their brain is not telling them that it hurts.

"I just ran into the exact situation that you described in the training, I could not believe it, his hand was black and blue but he was not crying and told me it did not hurt, thanks to the training I recognized the situation and we applied ice immediately". Camp Leader

Tips were provided on how to handle over stimulated children including modifying the environment for the best results. We explained our Snoozelen room and its function and how to effectively deal with the behaviours of children with FASD. FASD 101 explaining the brain and what FASD looks like. We explained that every child is different and that we do not try to adjust the child/youth we "try differently" and adjust the environment. The staff/volunteers were left with a lot of resources including the Caregiver resource package and FASD Tip sheets from www.skfasnetwork.ca.

Due to time restraints and lack of funding, the committee acknowledges the fact that the training provided was not optimum in nature for any special needs groupings let alone children/youth with FASD. After the first year's experiences; the committee had been more specific with training, ensuring smaller groups, providing more structure as well as adding additional volunteers experienced with FASD. Even with these changes it was as we suspected, the children's activities and behaviors need to be managed and executed by individuals who have direct experience with children/youth with FASD. Adding proof to the common assumptions that FASD children/youth can not simply be put into regular camps, classrooms, daycares etc. without specialized leaders and reinforcements.

Free Time

While the staff and volunteers where in their training session, families had some free time to unwind from the hectic day of packing and traveling. Snacks, board games and the games room were enjoyed by some, while others took the opportunity for a leisurely walk outdoors or enjoyed a quiet evening in their rooms getting their children to bed early so they could become more familiar with their new surroundings.

Throughout the weekend counseling sessions where available from Sharron Richards, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Laura Spero, London Southwestern Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre and Chris Margetson, Senior FASD Consultant.

Reiki; provided by Jennifer Sells, Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services; was a great hit with the parents/caregivers. The reiki room was set up with a massage table, soft relaxation music and dim lighting. Reiki is a Japanese healing technique aimed to promote relaxation and healing. Using light touch on the clothed body the reiki practitioner assists the person in accessing their own healing abilities, as well as deep relaxation. It was noted that more opportunities

for additional practitioners; and/or other relaxation methods; be incorporated into similar projects

Family Illustration Journal

All families worked together in the creation of a Family Illustration Journal, where each family was provided with a book and craft supplies, and given the task to create a book representative of their family. Children were encouraged to express themselves through pictures, drawings, collages, and stories.

There were two sessions provided for the journal – the first of which was to allow families to pick out the pictures and materials that they needed to depict their family on the cover of their Family Life Journals. The second session was the actual creation of the journal and each family reporting back to the larger group the significance of the materials chosen for their journal. Families were encouraged to continue the use of their journal throughout the next year including family challenges and successes.

Child Activities

While the parents were attending information sessions and workshops, the children were participating in age appropriate activities. The children, ages nine months to two years of age were cared for by experienced volunteers with age appropriate activities, toys, movies, and music to enjoy. Camp leadership counsellors provided children aged 3-5 years old with fun filled crafts, games, movies, songs, stories, as well as some outdoor activities.



The older children and teens participated in outdoor group activities, such as snow soccer and low ropes. Indoor activities were also enjoyed throughout the day. In addition the children aged 6-10 years participated in drumming, story telling, and making dream catchers and those 11 up made their own hand drums, and also aided in the building of a sweat lodge.

This year there were issues surrounding the 6-12 group. Ratios were still much lower than that of the Day Nurseries Act with 1:5 overall ratio for the children/youth. However, the inexperience of the camp leader staff in dealing specifically with FASD affected children/youth left some confusing and frustrating times for everyone concerned.

For those who attended both last years camp and this years camp it was evident that the smaller group sizes and additional structure that was put in place must be emphasized strongly to camp counsellors.

“On our part, I still felt somewhat unprepared for unexpected stuff such as our TV/DVD player problems and such.” Camp Counselor

“Movie night was a disaster to get started, children were over stimulated due to the large number of children who grouped together until they were separated into their own groups and the TV/DVD was fixed” Parent

The last minute cancellation of three FASD volunteers and the fact that two Geneva Park staff became ill and had to go home created a staffing issue for us. Even with this staffing issue the situation could have been handled much more effectively if the scheduled activities had been better organized, the smaller groups did not all come together before going off to do activities, and if more staff had experience with children affected by FASD. Alternative crafts and quiet activities should be prepared in advance; ready in the event of a problem.

FASD affected children can take part in most regular activities if those around them understand the environmental adjustments that are needed. Basketball is a good example of an activity that should have adjustments i.e. not a lot of people in a gym, which echoes with the sound of the balls as well as the sound of the voices around them. Using an outdoor facility with some cooperation to keep yelling to a minimum and directions broken down into small process steps would be great steps in reducing over stimulation.

Although there may have been some confusion and frustration from a few parents, volunteers or staff; this did not stop the children/youth from having a great time anyway. From the children/youth evaluations handed in, it is pretty evident that the children had a great time with 80% happy with the activities and 87% happy with staff/volunteers. They also enjoyed meeting new friends.

When asked “What did you like most about the weekend” one child/youth answered “meeting friends and kids like me”.

Let's Talk for Moms and Straight Talk for Dads

Being a caregiver to a child affected with FASD can be very challenging. Men and women were encouraged to take part in separate workshops – giving them some time to communicate with others who together may provide solutions to challenges that may be facing as well as get some tips on stress relief.



The workshop for moms focused on strategies for coping with life with children affected by FASD. As well as giving the women ideas and methods to relax from the sometimes stressful roles they are in. The women were also provided with decadent treats, and encouraged to find ways to treat and take care of themselves, so that the rejuvenated women would be able to better care for their families.

The workshop for dads had a similar focus. The men discussed strategies for coping with situations that arise in everyday life. The men opened up while discussing spousal support systems, connecting with their children, and common approaches for dealing with children affected by FASD.

Parenting Strategies, If Not Solutions

Chris Margetson, Senior FASD Consultant; led a workshop for all parents focusing on adapting to situations, which can present themselves in everyday life when living with the effects of FASD. As an experienced caregiver of a young man affected with FASD Chris led the discussions with adaptations from Stephanie Jones and Laura Cunningham's book *Strategies if Not Solutions*.

Many evaluation comments showed their appreciation for this workshop. Parents were left with more hope for the future and new concrete strategies to reduce or eliminate potential chaos and make their lives and the lives of their families much more enjoyable. Parents went away knowing that their child should not be expected to fit into the "cookie cutter" effect but that each child has his/her own unique traits and the environment around them needs to be adjusted.

Concepts such as calming techniques and the use of comfort corners were explored along with sensory de-stimulating within the household and school/day

care environment. Parents were given insight into the fact that children/youth with FASD have many issues when it comes to foods. Using pictures for processing steps within a certain task can help in morning preparation for school. Many caregivers were unaware that children with FASD find multi-textured foods very hard to eat, as others may find they do not know when they are hungry or when they are full.

In line one night for dinner a caregiver commented - "All these years we have been trying to get him to eat everything we eat, now I know that he is not gagging on purpose".

Drumming and Story Telling

Elder Joanne Kakaquayash, led the drumming and story telling. The children attending enjoyed and were fascinated by the sound of the drums and the calmness of her voice as they listened with excitement to this enthusiastic story teller. As a tribe's scribe a Story Teller is responsible for telling the oral history of the as well as passing on the fables to children.

Sweat lodge

During the afternoon, some of the youth volunteered to assist with the building of the sweat lodge which was led by Greg Flynn and assisted by the elders Joanne Katkaquayash and Alex Jacobs.

In the evening many enjoyed the spiritual serenity of the sweat lodge, which for some was a new experience providing a new heightened interest in the native culture and the ceremonies that are so essential in the lives of native children affected with FASD and their families

Dream Catchers

Kim Meawasige led the workshop on dream catchers. Kim explained the importance of the dream catcher and the significance of each component that is needed to complete the dream catcher. Many of the children in attendance have dream catchers in their homes. Now they can enjoy the beauty of their dream catcher and have an understanding of the meaning and significance of it.

Drum Making

Youth aged 11+ attended a workshop on Drum Making led by D. White. The youth left the workshop excited to have their own drums.

In drum making we must acknowledge that there are never two drums that are the same – each one is distinctive in structure, spirit, and life based on the the hands of the one who made it. The drum is not just a music-maker, but a voice for the soul within the music



Parent and Caregiver FASD Resources

Mary Cunningham provided parents and caregivers with an overview of the resources that they received over the weekend and how they could use these resources to assist them in their everyday life.

The resources included in their registration package were strategically provided to assist families in their understanding of FASD and techniques and tools for everyday strategies. They were also provide so that the families would have some tools to provide to their child's daycare, school or camp leader.

As a committee we understand the limitation of providing information with no practical assistance, but we also know that knowledge can lead to a caring, motivated teacher or Early Childhood Educator to become the advocate that the family needs in order to get their child the education they deserve.

FASD and the Educational System

Parents and Caregivers took part in this workshop lead by Mary Cunningham. When dealing with children affected by FASD, most parents dread the many issues associated with their child attending school and/or receiving the services that they need in order to succeed in school. Many children with FASD have exceptional IQs and can excel within their education only if they are provided with the essential environments. This includes actual physical changes i.e. reduction in the use of florescent lights, limited noise including the hum of fish tanks etc.; and less paper work on the walls. It also includes more one on one to be used

as an external brain for the child. This person can break down directions into smaller processing steps and assist the child with picture boards to complete their task. Phys' Ed can also be revised so that the noise of 25 classmates running in the gym does not overwhelm the child with FASD.

Parents and caregivers learned how to work with the educational system to break down some of the barriers that they face daily. A very important step for parents is educating the educator. With that knowledge, the child's teacher can become a major advocate in your child's success in the school system. Resources provided to the families over the weekend can be used to explain FASD to the educators.

It was noted that although some left the workshop feeling overwhelmed with the work that they now understood needed to be accomplished, they were very thankful for the tips on dealing with the educational system. It was also clear that with an already hectic life, these parents need to have an advocate who will work with them and their schools to ensure their child is provided with the right environment and the educator is provided with tools and techniques to assist the child. FASD children can succeed if we do not put them into a box and WE try differently. By providing the child with a successful education we can hope to avoid some of the secondary disabilities that lead the child into a life of confusion and frustration.

Evening Activities

While the children were participating in pajama parties and watching movies, the parents had a wide selection of workshops and activities to choose among.

Parents had the option to relax alone, or network with other parents at the camp. To further relax and rejuvenate, parents could sign up for a Reiki session and partake in a relaxing massage experience. A sweat lodge, whose construction was aided by the older campers, provided a traditional native healing and rejuvenation experience for the adults.

Mary Cunningham presented information on Brain Injury and FASD, showing the effects of alcohol on the brain, and how this related to children with FASD. Individual counseling sessions were provided; parents could sign up to discuss their individual questions and needs with an expert on FASD.

MindMasters & Mini-MindMasters

Because parents are not the only people dealing with stress in their daily lives, the MindMasters and Mini-MindMasters workshop, presented by Julia Spadetto, gave children the tools necessary to deal with the stress they encounter. The program contains audio and visual components that aid the children in expressing their emotions and relaxing for stressful or over-stimulating situations.

The workshop was designed to assist parents with identifying stress within their child/youth and then using techniques from these two programs, which were taught to the caregivers, who in turn can assist their child/youth to identify stressful situations and how to reduce that stress.

These two programs were developed and distributed through Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario and CHEO. The scripts for the positive living skill activities were created by Dr. Terry Orlick, Julie Koudys and Eileen Sheridan. The programs consist of parent handouts, activities and facilitator notes along with supplies needed to complete the activities. Breathing techniques are designed to attract the child like playing Puff Ball Hockey where the children sit across from one another and with a straw try to blow as many cotton balls to the other side of the table as possible. This gives you the opportunity to show them how to inhale and how to exhale and also helps them understand when they are holding their breath and how it feels. This gives children/youth a better understanding of how to recognize the stress within their body and use the techniques to reduce that stress.

Strategies for FASD affected children

Laura Spero led the discussion with two FASD affected youth Robert Wilkinson and Natasha Eli, assisting in the workshop. The panel answered questions and provided strategies and techniques for parents to try. Every child is unique and no one solution will work for every child affected by FASD but parents left the workshop with the knowledge that there is something they can do to change the situation; hopelessness was replaced with hopefulness.

Staffing

Staffing for the camp was partially provided by the YMCA Geneva park staff, totaling 20 people, and partially by committee members and other volunteers (another 25 people) for a staff total of 45 staff and volunteers.

All staff received training on the Friday evening prior to working with the children, with Kim Meawasige as the lead trainer with several committee members as facilitators. Kim is a FASD expert from the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC).

During the weekend, staff or volunteers were assigned to specific activities or workshops to ensure that all children had proper supervision. Assigning of staff and volunteers to workshops and activities was decided based on the background of the person, the nature of activity or workshop, and the expected number of people needed for that activity/workshop. Several volunteers were unassigned as designated as “floaters”. Their task was to move between the

different child/youth activities, checking to see if any additional supports were required.

Camp Evaluations

All campers, staff and volunteers received an evaluation to complete and return at the end of their camp experience. Evaluations consisted of both child focused and adult focused questionnaires as well as an organizational/programming questionnaire for volunteers and staff. A total of 68 adult evaluations and 94 child evaluations were returned providing us with their thoughts and reflections of their experience. Those included:

Parent Evaluations (68 respondents)

How useful was this weekend for your family?

Very	Somewhat	A Little	Not At All	No Answer
50	14	2	0	2

How much did you learn about FASD from the camp experience?

Very	Somewhat	A Little	Not At All	No Answer
33	23	10	0	2

How much do you feel you will use the information you received from your camp experience?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Not At All	No Answer
28	31	7	0	1

How useful was the information/activities contained in the following sessions, or how did you enjoy the family activity?

Session	Very	Somewhat	A Little	Hardly	Unanswered
Let's Talk for Moms	26	13	3	2	24
Straight Talk for Dads	17	6	2	1	42
Parenting Strategies	38	14	4	0	12
Family Illustration Journal	25	16	11	4	12
Counseling	7	4	0	1	na
Mind Masters or Mini Mind Masters	9	3	1	0	55
Sweat Lodge	2	0	0	1	65
Brain Injury Workshop	19	11	1	0	37
Icebreaker Friday Evening	22	19	10	0	17
Family Campfire	27	18	6	2	15
Family Scavenger Hunt	24	7	3	3	31

Overall, what was your experience with the following:

	Great	Good	Okay	Not Bad	Unanswered
Food	49	13	0	0	6
Accommodations	42	18	2	1	5
Geneva Park Staff	49	13	1	0	5
FASD Staff/Volunteers	56	5	2	0	5
Resources Provided	50	7	2	0	9

To what extent will your involvement with the FASD Camp Experience help you with the following:

	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot	Unanswered
Parenting Skills for Children with FASD	2	17	5	35	9
Strategies for Stress Reduction	4	7	26	21	10
Strategies for Child's Stress Reduction	3	4	22	20	19
Meeting New Friends	1	9	19	21	12

Would you have been able to attend this Family Weekend without the free accommodations, meals, and/or other subsidies for transportation?

Yes	No	Unanswered
24	38	6

The comments provided by the parents were, overall, very positive. Many expressed deep thanks for the opportunity to participate in a weekend such as this. Generally, the parents and caregivers were pleased with the workshops they attended, the resources they received, and the work of the volunteers and staff. A common improvement that was seen in the evaluations was to include longer transition time between events, and to have staff for the children's activities arrive on time and prepared. Several comments are shown below.

- Everything was better than we anticipated; the conference centre was great
- Everyone was helpful and knowledgeable
- Had a really good time; green shirts were awesome
- Great opportunity, and would love to be able to participate again
- Awesome experience

- Staff and resources were amazing
- More transition time required; location changes caused confusion
- Excellent site and people - thank you
- Makes me want to educate everyone about my kid's FASD
- Thank you so much for the wonderful opportunity
- It was better than I expected
- Loved the weekend; thanks for the hard work and dedicated staff that did an amazing job
- I learned its not their fault and we're not alone
- My son loved the experience, and I met a lot of other parents
- The activities were lots of fun
- I learned how to talk to my child, accept my child and build an effective relationship with them
- I learned that successful parenting of FASD children is possible, and they can have a future

Children's Evaluations

The children answered the following questions with the help of a parent or caregiver if necessary.

How the camp made me feel:

	Happy	Confused	Sad	Don't Know	Unanswered
Age appropriate activities	75	4	3	12	0
Staff/volunteers	82	6	1	5	0
Family Campfire	59	8	3	18	6
Family Scavenger Hunt	44	5	6	17	22
Food	78	4	4	8	0

What did you like most about the weekend? (Selected and Compiled Answers)

- Meeting friends and kids like me
- Making drums and playing outside
- Gave our family a chance to spend time together and have fun
- Time with my new friends
- Meeting new people
- Scenery & atmosphere
- Spending time with family
- Lots of different games
- Meeting other kids your age with FASD
- Crafts
- Being with other kids
- Playing outside

What did you not like about the weekend? (Selected and Compiled Answers)

- Nothing – I like everything!
- No seminars for kids to teach us about our siblings with FASD
- It was cold outside
- The long drive to get to camp
- Rushing
- Some activities were too noisy
- Camp needs to be longer – make it a week
- I loved camp!

If you were to come again, what would you change or add? (Selected and Compiled Answers)

- More transition time
- More time outside, and more transition time
- Make it longer; have more teen discussions
- Make it for a week in the summer
- Have a later breakfast
- Nothing; I loved everything
- More family activities so we can learn to work together as a family
- Another campfire
- Programs for kids to understand FASD
- Make it longer; spend more time with people our own age (have 12 yr old in with the teens)
- Add more days
- Make it a yearly event
- Make the camp in the summer so we can do more summer activities

Staff and Volunteer Evaluations

Overall, the staff and volunteers agreed that the weekend was a success. The workshops ran smoothly, although some appeared rushed due to late starts from parents and caregivers arriving late. Due to the nature of the event, it was expected that not all caregivers would be able to get to the workshops right away but the schedule was designed this way so that they would not get comfortable doing something else after their children were settled. However some of the caregivers felt like they were missing something and felt rushed, this is definitely not the intended outcome. Others were grateful that there was no idle time available. Staff and volunteers, even those who work in the social service field directly, stated that they had learned a great deal from this weekend, and look forward to applying their newfound knowledge in their work.

The YMCA Geneva Park staff that planned and implemented the children's program, were generally pleased with the results, although room for improvement was found. Even with the training, the staff still felt unable to handle the large

number of children, and would request more FASD volunteers for the children's groups, or making the groups much smaller, if the camp were to run again. One volunteer also commented that, even with all the planning that occurred for the children's activities, she still felt unprepared for the unexpected.

Staff and Volunteers left the weekend comforted by the fact that the camp was a great success and they had made a huge difference in the lives of those attending. It also left many of them wondering how to continue supporting those families and how to reach families that did not have the opportunity to attend.

Recommendations and Improvements

Based on all the events that took place at the camp, several actions could be taken to make the camp run more smoothly.

Scheduling

Leave more time between bringing children to their activities and adult workshops commencing.

Children's Programming and Staff Training

Several issues occurred with the execution of the children's programming. Children were split into age groups, and then split again into smaller groups. The children were not, however, assigned specific rooms, and the children were allowed to move between rooms during the sessions (with leaders). This caused confusion when the parents would return at the end of the activity, finding their child had moved rooms. In addition some children have a difficult time with change and transitions and/or are sensitive to loud noises or crowds, we need to minimize their anxieties.

Some of the activities that were chosen for the children to participate in over the weekend were not specifically geared to children that experience the difficulties associated with FASD. For example, some of the activities had multi-step or complicated instructions that a number of children were unable to understand. The activity in itself may not be the issue in all situations but it is extremely beneficial for a person with knowledge and practical experience in working with children affected by FASD to review and approve the children's activities and process to achieve the activities in order to ensure that they will be appropriate.

Although some of the YMCA leaders had been present last year and received training both years, a much more thorough understanding of the needs of children with FASD is needed. For example, playing basketball in a room full of teens is not an optimal activity for a child with FASD, nor is a room full of smaller groups waiting to go to their own activities. Once an FASD-affected individual has been over-stimulated it will lead to difficulties even after moving into their smaller groups. Activities need to be thoroughly organized and ready to start when the children arrive. Waiting for TVs to get set up or movies to arrive leaves time for unstructured chaos. FASD children can take part in many of the regularly planned leadership activities, however, the instruction and pace of the activity needs to be adjusted prior to implementation.

Recommendations

To resolve this problem, the smaller groups will be assigned to the same staff members and volunteers for the weekend. Parents would always know whom their children are with. If they are to move to outdoor activities they would always be scheduled to be back at the drop off spot when parents have completed their workshop.

In the event of programming issues, staff needs to ensure that back-up activities are ready to be put into place to avoid heightened sensitivities. Even 5 or 10 minutes of idle time can trigger the beginning of a difficult session. Children with FASD can be very attentive when working on a craft or when they understand the direction being provided to them.

Although the training was provided to demonstrate the over-simulation to programming staff, a much more thorough understanding would come from professionals dedicated to working with children with FASD. Child/Youth Leaders require more time to “soak in” the information. A training course needs to be developed that involves a practicum component

Planning Committee/Funding

With the short time frame to plan camp; as funds become available late in the fiscal year; the committee was not able to implement strategies for recruitment of additional FASD volunteers.

This project was an extension of workload for committee members. We need to have dedicated staff for FASD projects and events. Many of the people planning the camp are doing so “off the corners of their desks” and their day-to-day responsibilities suffer as a result.

It is also recognized that each region should have a local camp, providing attendees with professional contacts in their own areas and support systems among families. However, it is also recognized that there are inequities with community capacity and funding needs within the regions.

Recommendation

There is a need for dedicated regional funding to provide ongoing supports and activities for families living with the effects of FASD. As leaders we need to be the voices of those families who are already overwhelmed with everyday life.

Communication

Improvements to networking and communication were mentioned as well. Some committee members were unsure as to “did my email get to her”.

In order to promote the formation of support groups within a small geographic area, it has been suggested to include the town or city that each person came from; therefore, at a glance, each adult would know if the person is close to his or her home. Another suggestion was to construct a bulletin board with the five geographic regions, possibly broken down by cities with each region, in a common area. Adults knowing of resources in any of the area can post information for everyone at the camp.

Recommendation

Dedicate a FASD Interventions and Support Working Group Conference on the Public Health Agency of Canada, CAPC/CPNP Webboard.

Add home location to name tags and produce a map of regions in Ontario and add last names of those attending to the region they are from.

Conclusion

Overall, the FASD Camp Experience 2007 was very successful. Although there were some areas where improvements can be made, the individuals involved with the planning of the camp realize that the process of executing a project such as this is a dynamic educational experience that will constantly improve, but never be perfect.

Comments from staff, volunteers, parents and caregivers have displayed the tremendous impact a function, such as this camp, has on the people it involves. The parents and caregivers of the children affected by FASD expressed how much they have learned from their experience at the camp. Where FASD was new to their family, the adults were thankful for the knowledge and strategies offered by everyone at the camp; so many adults expressed how comforted they were to know that they were not alone, and that everyone else at the camp understood what they were going through. Families that had been living with FASD in their households for years were grateful to be able to pass their knowledge on to help others. Staff and volunteers who had been working with children affected by FASD for years commented that they learned more from this camp than they had from the sum of all their years of prior experience.

With all of the wonderful experiences that arose from the two-day event, it is extremely important to remember that it would not be possible without financial aid. Donations of money, materials, and people from organizations across the province all collaborated to create an event which will continue to affect the lives of families living with FASD.

The camp has led the committee to the conclusion that there is a lot more work needed to support families than we can do on our own. We need to become the voice of families. We need to educate politicians/funders/decision makers on the life-long supports that are needed for these families. FASD needs to be on their radar with dedicated funding and training provided. Families are struggling to understand FASD themselves; we need to educate the professionals at schools/daycares/camps about FASD and the solutions that can help them succeed at providing an environment essential to the child's learning needs.

"Some of my misconceptions were shattered" Parent

"All children with FASD need to have the opportunity to meet other children just like me". Youth

"I learned how to talk to my child, accept them for who they are, and build an effective relationship with them" Parent

Appendices

Service Providers Letter/Application (FASDCamp2007.pdf)
Request for Donation Letter (FASDDonationletter.pdf)
Volunteer Application (Volunteerappl.pdf)
Acceptance Letter (acceptanceletter2007.pdf)
Campers Profile (CamperProfile2007.pdf)
Waiting List Letter (WaitinglistletterFASD2007.pdf)
Request for Transportation Subsidy (TransportationFundingRequest.pdf)
FASD Camp Experience 2007 Program Agenda (FASD-Agenda Final.pdf)
Newsletter (FASDNewsletter2007.pdf)
Caregiver Resource Package (CaregiverResource.pdf)
Sample of Child ID card (Childidcards.pdf)
Photo Consent (PhotographConsentFASDCamp2007.pdf)