



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FASD Awareness Day September Ninth

RAPID CITY, SD – September 9 is the annual Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Awareness Day. International events are held at 9:09 a.m., the 9th minute of the 9th hour of the 9th day of the 9th month of the year. In many cities across the world, church bells are rung at this date and time to remind women not to drink during the 9 months of pregnancy.

FASD is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy and is America's leading known preventable cause of mental retardation and birth defects. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, one in ten U.S. women will consume alcohol while pregnant and approximately 40,000 babies are born each year in the United States with FASD.

FASD effects may include physical, mental, behavioral and learning disabilities with lifelong implications. Children and adults with FASD are at high risk for speech and language disorders, learning disabilities, hearing impairments, mental retardation, attention deficit disorders, depression, and other health impairments.

In order to improve outcomes for individuals with FASD and their families, it is vital that children be diagnosed and referred for intervention and treatment early in life. Individuals with FASD require not only information, training and technical assistance for early diagnosis but also effective interventions for assisting individuals with FASD to function successfully in society.

The United States Senate has again recognized the need to remind people that FASD can be 100 percent prevented if women don't drink during pregnancy. It encourages people to observe ceremonies to promote awareness and increase compassion for individuals with FASD.

The Chiesman Center for Democracy, Inc., with support from a non-competitive grant sponsored by Senator Tim Johnson, has established an FASD Center in Rapid City. The Center works in conjunction with partners which include; University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Center for Disabilities, Black Hills State University School of Education and South Dakota Department of Health.

The Center is a clearinghouse to facilitate information dissemination, develop and implement public awareness and outreach campaigns, and design and conduct training seminars for educators, service providers, families, and caregivers.

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