



# EXPLAINING FASD TO YOUR CHILD

## WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW...

- **Cause of FASD:** The brain damage and resulting difficulties of FASD are caused by a mother drinking alcohol while pregnant. Often this happens before a mother knows she is pregnant, *not* because she wants to hurt her baby.
- **FASD is a spectrum:** Each child with FASD is affected differently. Some have more difficulties and challenges, and some have less.
- **What helps:** Using an external brain, having others help them think through decisions, remembering their challenges are because of an organic brain injury, it is *not* their fault!

## STRATEGIES

- **When should you tell your child?** There is no 'right age' to tell a child they have FASD, so take cues from her - a good time to talk is when she starts asking questions about why things for her are different.
- **Have the conversation in an understandable way:** Use story books, pictures, and other visuals to help you explain what FASD is.
- **Use simple terms to explain the facts:** Remember your child's chronological and developmental age. You may need to repeat several times, and provide more information as your child gets older.
- **Explain FASD to your child's friends and siblings:** Explaining FASD to other children can help them to accept your child and understand why he is sometimes treated differently at home and school.

Reinforce for your child that he is *unique*. Remind him that everyone is different, and everyone learns differently.

Tell your child that even though he has a disability called FASD, he also has lots of abilities, strengths, and skills. FASD is just a part of who he is, but it doesn't *define* who he is.

*Make a list with your child of all the qualities and skills he has that other people admire about him and all the things that he likes about himself.*

## QUICK TIPS

- **HELPFUL BOOKS THAT CAN HELP YOU TO EXPLAIN FASD:**
  - "Sam's Bear" by Merryl Hammond & Rob Collins
  - "But Michael Makes Me Laugh" by Lori Stetina
  - "My Sibling has a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Can I Catch It?" By Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

