

Support Groups

Characteristics

- Lack of drive
- Poor time concept
- Poor understanding of money
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor problem solving
- Easily confused and frustrated
- Poor social skills and boundaries
- Lack of common sense
- Shifting blame – not accepting responsibility, makes light of difficult or dangerous situations

Characteristics

- Easily led by others - victimized
- Difficulty prioritizing
- Not completing multiple tasks given at one time
- Difficulty beginning first step in a routine task
- Over/under reaction to an incident
- Sexual safety concern
- Need for personal contact – making noise and chatting constantly
- Need for constant supervision – use of door alarm at night

You Need to Understand

- While every child diagnosed with FASD is unique, the experiences of the families is not. Everyone has a contribution to make
- Families of older children provide a glimpse into the future for families of younger children
- When families are not present for an extended period of time – check in with them and let them know they are missed.
- We know not to judge the heart of our kids, don't judge the hearts of their family either.
- Establish a relationship with group members. It is easier to ask for and accept help if the person feels valued for themselves.
- As families experience success in a specific area they can then serve as advocates for another family needing help in that area – such as school, county services, community programs, etc.
- Use “professional” support – HaysKids, adoption, county, school, etc.

Help the Families Understand

- The depth of the disability
- Working harder will not work – you must work differently – crossing the line
- This is not an easy path
- Parenting techniques specific to the diagnosis – “relationship parenting”
- The need for couples to work together – tag team and support
- Use advocates and support groups
- Services available in the community
- HaysKids parenting training and support

Help the Families Understand

- Parenting in these families brings out the personal weaknesses of the parents – especially in the area of mental health
- Divorce rate is higher in these families – parents become worn out
- It is vital that the parents develop personal alone time away from the family – to both relax and rejuvenate
- You can not make everyone understand so don't try.
- Family friendships will change and that can be a good thing.
- Most long term changes in the family's quality of life are because of the change of thinking by the parents/ caregivers instead of behavioral changes by the individual

Group Structure

- Have some time spent NOT talking about FASD. Everyone needs time away from the issues of life and an opportunity to feel “normal”.
- Group time must address:
 - 1) emergencies
 - 2) current issues
 - 3) short lesson
 - 4) feedback
 - 5) future topics
- Provide childcare during the meeting
- Refreshments may be healthy snacks, pitch-in, picnic, etc