

# Pregnancy, Alcohol and Trauma-informed Practice

## Information for Service Providers

Current or past experiences of violence and trauma are one of the major reasons a woman may continue to drink throughout her pregnancy. Being a “trauma informed” service provider means learning to see every aspect of your service or program from the perspective of a woman who has experienced or is experiencing violence or trauma.

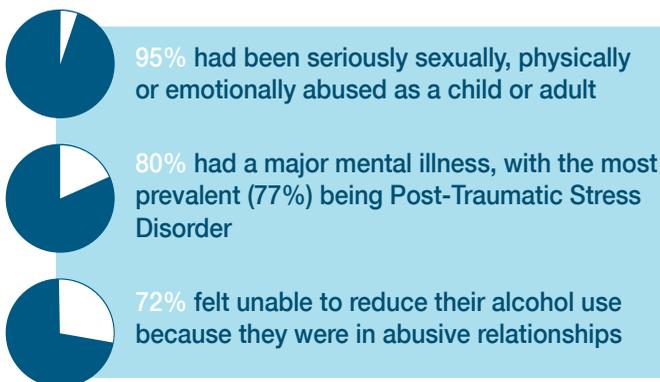
### What is trauma?

Trauma can result from early experiences in life such as child abuse, neglect and witnessing violence as well as later experiences such as violence, accidents, natural disaster, war and sudden unexpected loss. Trauma results from experiences that overwhelm an individual’s capacity to cope.

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a diagnosis used to describe one type of mental health response that can result from trauma.
- Using substances to cope is very common among women with current or past experiences of trauma.

### A Strong Relationship: Violence, trauma and FASD

In a study of 80 mothers who had given birth to a child with FASD:



### Changing the Conversation

Working from a trauma-informed perspective means changing how we think and talk about alcohol use during pregnancy.

“Why is this woman continuing to drink alcohol and placing her child at risk of FASD?”

“Even though she knows the facts, there’s a reason she’s still drinking. I wonder...”

“She doesn’t care about her baby.”

“She’s making decisions to keep herself and her baby safe.”

“I just need to show her how bad drinking during pregnancy is.”

“I need to show her that it’s safe for her to share what’s happening in her life and that I’m able to support her.”

“Her drinking is a problem.”

“Her drinking is an attempt to cope with problems.”

“What’s wrong with this woman?”

What happened to this woman?”

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#### References

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2. Poole, N. and L. Greaves, eds. (2012). *Becoming Trauma Informed*. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: Toronto, ON.
3. Royal College of Nursing. (2008). *Informed Gender Practice: Mental health acute care that works for women*. National Institute for Mental Health: London, UK.
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## The Prevention Conversation

It’s time to talk about alcohol and pregnancy