FASD and Supervision

Understanding why support may remain necessary across ages



FASD is a lifelong, brain-based disability affecting core brain functions.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a spectrum. Support needs vary widely. For some individuals, supervision remains necessary not because of age or intelligence, but because adaptive functioning, executive functioning, judgment, and safety awareness are impaired.

Knowing is not the same as doing

A person may talk well, explain a task, or show a skill, yet still be unable to initiate, organize, complete, or safely carry it out independently. Verbal ability and intelligence can mask substantial disability.

Supervision provides essential external support

Caregivers may supply the judgment, planning, memory, sequencing, regulation, and follow-through that the person cannot consistently provide for themselves. This support may be verbal, physical, or simply being present and available.

Living in the NOW

Many people with FASD have difficulty connecting past experience, present actions, and future consequences. An immediate need, interest, or feeling may take over, making it hard to stop, think ahead, or learn from what happened before.

Capacity changes functioning

Functioning can drop when the brain is tired, overwhelmed, anxious, or overloaded. A person may manage a task one day and be unable to do it safely the next. Repeated prompting can increase agitation when capacity is already exhausted.

When situations become unsafe

People with FASD may not recognize when a situation is becoming dangerous or know how to change course. Whether influenced by others or following their own impulses, they may continue without recognizing the risks. Supervision helps identify danger and intervene before harm occurs.

A safe home doesn't mean independence everywhere

An experienced caregiver may prevent problems through a predictable environment, careful monitoring, and early intervention. The person's stability can make their support needs less visible. Without similar support at school, work, or in the community, those same impairments may lead to difficulties or unsafe situations.

Key message

Supervision needs can't be determined by what a person knows or can do on a good day. It's important to understand what they can reliably and safely do without another person supplying the support.

FASD NETWORK of NORTHERN CALIFORNIA