

Addiction in Adults with FASD

Dan Dubovsky MSW
FASD Specialist
ddubovksy@verizon.net
1-215-694-8450

Addiction Treatment: Many people are not successful in addiction treatment. There may be many reasons for this. When someone has been in a treatment setting for three times or more, we need to ask what we can do differently to help this person succeed instead of often thinking that the person is not truly motivated for sobriety. Due to the damage to structures of the brain in FASD that has been identified, typical approaches in addiction treatment such as individual and group therapy, motivational interviewing, and level, privilege, and pass systems are often not effective. However, these are approaches typically utilized in addiction treatment as well as in other systems. As individuals with FASD are most often not diagnosed, they are often seen as non-compliant, resistant, and unmotivated in treatment.

If we want to provide the best help for individuals with FASD who have addiction issues, we must take their brain functioning into account and modify what we do in treatment. Utilizing a more positive focused system rather than a reward and consequence system, using senses other than verbal to convey information, having shorter, more frequent sessions, reviewing what goes on in group therapy and what that means for the person for a brief time right after the group, and letting the person know what he or she is doing right can all be more effective in improving outcomes. Concepts such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy can be modified for those with FASD but not used the way they were developed.

Our goal should be to provide whatever each person needs in order to function at their best and to support their family and others in working towards that goal. Therefore, treatment must be a truly individualized approach as everyone is different.