

## **Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol: How to Ask “The Question”**

You are working with a client and you feel that there is a possibility that prenatal exposure to alcohol is playing a role in their difficulties. How do you gather information from a mother that will provide you with accurate information?

Simply asking, "Did you drink during pregnancy?" is not going to get the information you need. Here are some tips:

- It's all about relationship. The more a client trusts you the more they are willing to share. The conversation about prenatal alcohol exposure may be able to happen over one time with your client or it may take many visits to gather all the information you need.
- Gather information about their relationship with alcohol before they became pregnant by asking what was their partying lifestyle like, etc..
- Gauge if alcohol was a way to deal with difficult emotions, trauma or stress.
- Pose questions such as, "In the months before you learned you were pregnant, how many days a week did you drink alcohol, how many drinks a day, what is the most you would have in one day?"
- Once you have established patterns of alcohol use you can then ask about their pregnancy asking questions such as, "Tell me about your pregnancy. Did you plan on becoming pregnant? Was it a happy time? How far along were you in your pregnancy before you found out you were pregnant? What type of prenatal care did you receive?"
- If, after asking these questions, you have determined that there was indeed prenatal alcohol exposure, you can talk about what this means for the child. Beginning conversations with, "Did you know that many women drink alcohol before they know that they are pregnant?" or "Many women get inaccurate information about alcohol during pregnancy but did you know that..." can be a helpful way of blamelessly involving a client and opens up for further dialogue.
- Also, keep in mind factors that increase the likelihood that a woman may have drunk during pregnancy. Some of those factors are: being involved in abusive relationships has drunk during previous pregnancies and has history of trauma or abuse.

For more information about screening tools for service providers please visit

<http://www.caphc.org/fasd/>

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