



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Sept. 5, 2012**

### **Women Reminded of Health Risks Associated with Drinking Alcohol during Pregnancy**

September is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month

**Harrisburg** – The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs is reminding the public that alcohol consumption by pregnant women can seriously harm unborn children. September is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Month by proclamation of Governor Tom Corbett.

FASD is an umbrella term for the range of effects that can occur in the children of women who drink alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications. An estimated one in 100 babies is born with FASD, or about 40,000 annually.

“As many as one in eight pregnant women drink alcohol, putting their child at risk of permanent learning disabilities, poor coordination or delayed speech,” said Secretary Gary Tennis. “Because the stakes are so high, it’s critical that women who are pregnant – or might become pregnant – stop drinking.”

Various studies show that there is no safe level of drinking during pregnancy. Even one binge-drinking episode can result in permanent damage to the fetus. Alcohol can produce more harmful, long-term effects to an unborn child than many other abused substances.

“The effects of FASD can be extensive for a child and the family,” said Tennis. “FASD is entirely preventable if a woman doesn’t drink while pregnant, and the risks are much lower if she stops drinking as soon as she learns she is expecting. It can make a difference in an unborn child’s future.”

For more information, visit [www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov).

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**Editor’s Note:** The text of the governor’s proclamation follows:

**FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD) AWARENESS MONTH**  
September 2012

WHEREAS, Healthy children are among the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's most important resources, and FASD is the leading preventable cause of intellectual and developmental disabilities; and

WHEREAS, FASD is a set of mental, physical and neurobehavioral birth defects that is the direct result of alcohol use during pregnancy. As many as one in every one hundred births may be impacted by prenatal exposure to alcohol; and

WHEREAS, each year, taxpayers spend an estimated \$6 billion nationally to treat children and adults diagnosed with FASD; and

WHEREAS, more than 50 percent of women of childbearing age drink alcohol and 1 in 8 pregnant women drink alcohol; and

WHEREAS, FASDs are 100 percent preventable if women avoid alcohol entirely while pregnant or planning to become pregnant; and

WHEREAS, it is the goal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to raise awareness among its residents, especially women of childbearing age, regarding FASD education, prevention and intervention; and

WHEREAS, International FASD Day was first observed on Sept. 9, 1999, so that the ninth day of the ninth month would always be a reminder that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.

THEREFORE, I, Tom Corbett, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim the month of September, as FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AWARENESS MONTH in Pennsylvania. I encourage all Pennsylvanians to remember that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol, and ask that you support those individuals and families affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Tom Corbett, Governor

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