



SCREAMS - Seven Secrets to Success For persons with FASD in the Court System

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Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are likely to fail in treatment and/or probation programs unless specific strategies are applied.

Structure: Daily routine; regular schedule; concrete explanations; simple rules; step-by-step directions. Teens and adults with FASD often do well in prison, because of the structure and routine. They can cope with this much better than the responsibility of probation and independence, which they can't handle.

Cues: Memory deficits indicate a need for constant reminders, especially for rules, appointments, and medications. Rules need to be reviewed daily. Strategies for problem may require repeated rehearsals. Visual cues such as charts and picture signs are helpful. Regular phone calls and house visits may help.

Role models: They learn by imitating others, especially parents, siblings, peers, athletes, and TV personalities. Show them what is expected, don't just tell them. Provide mentor, coach, one-on-one staff. Role play healthy responses to problem situations. Learn new behaviors through practice and repetition.

Environment: Arrest feels like physical assault. Push leads to shove. Handcuffs feel painful. Removal of meds leads to withdrawal and increased behavior problems. Sensory overload from lights and noises.

Attitude of others: Think in terms of "brain damage." They are victims before they are perpetrators. Adjust your expectations to developmental level of 6-year-old. Problems can be neurological in origin as well as psychological and may not respond to traditional interventions. If they get arrested for the same crime over and over, it's not working. Be sure everyone on the team receives training in FAS issues.

Medication: With "simple" FASD, the combination of a stimulant plus an SSRI works best. Often there are other mental health issues that require different meds. There are hundreds of combinations that might work. It takes time and patience to find what works for each individual. The right meds can restore chemical balance in the brain and give the person increased control over behavior.

Supervision: Goal for our children: Independence to achieve their potential. For people with FASD, their freedom often leads to making decisions that place themselves and others in danger. "Freedom" for FASD can lead to life on the streets, in prison, or in the morgue. Safety and protection should be priorities.

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FASD is more serious than FAS. The adolescent who looks normal and appears to be bright may be the child at highest risk. 90% of the time, the disability goes unrecognized, undiagnosed, and untreated. Of all adults with FASD, 23% have attempted suicide; almost half of them contemplate suicide. Most suffer

from clinical depression. Many have dual diagnoses. The buzz word in the disabilities community is “Self Determination.” For people with FASD, Self Determination can mean Self Termination.