



NPO 73352  
Registration 2008/002501/08

## VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

### 1. OUR MISSION

We provide a safe and loving temporary home to abused, abandoned and neglected children. Furthermore we feed, clothe and attend to any medical requirements that are needed and introduce them to a family structure thus preparing them for the future.

### 2. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Miracle Kidz is a safe house for abused, abandoned and neglected babies and toddlers. A number of the babies either have FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders) and ADHD (Attention-deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) or are drug babies.

Our safe house is not an orphanage – the children do have biological parents and if conditions have improved these children will be reunited with their parents, otherwise sent to foster homes or children's homes.

We care for mainly babies and toddlers, but have had emergency placements of older children.

We do not only see to it that they are fed and clothed, but also provide a loving temporary home for them. We tend to their illnesses, broken hearts and spirits.

### 3. WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

We appreciate your commitment to volunteer your time with us here at Miracle Kidz, however it's important that you understand what ADHD and FASD is before you start working here. We encourage you to use your free time to Google and do research on working with kids that have behavioural challenges.

Caring for a child with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a journey. It can sometimes be very challenging and very rewarding at the same time. You cannot care for a child with an FASD without having it change your life and most often, for the better. You will meet some amazing people, make some amazing friendships, and see a beautiful child work really hard to be the best person they can be with your love and support.

### 4. ON FASD

- Learn as much as you can about FASD. Read books, attend trainings, conferences, and support groups. Not just at the beginning of the journey, but all throughout.
- Get accustomed to educating many people on FASD, including professionals. It is a very misunderstood disorder.

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#### ***Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders***

*(FASD) is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioural, and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications.*

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#### 4.1 Remember

- Take your child's age and cut it in half. That is the age you can expect them to act.
- It is a spectrum disorder. Children and adults with an FASD function at different levels.
- FASD is brain damage. Permanent brain damage.

#### 4.2 Patience

- Be patient. Children with an FASD can tell you a rule, but that does not mean they can always follow it. This is very frustrating.
- Re-teach everything. Don't get irritable or short tempered when you have to teach your child the same things over and over again — sooner or later (likely later) they will get it.
- Know that conventional parenting techniques often don't work with children with an FASD. A sticker chart may work well with one child and not another. Time-outs rarely work with our kids. We have to be creative and find alternative strategies. And know that when we find one that works, it might not work for more than a few weeks (or less, or more).

#### 4.3 Routine

- Keep to a routine when possible and let the child know ahead of time what the plan is for each day. Post a daily calendar and run through the routine with the child each morning.
- Prepare for transitions such as getting in and out of the car or bathtub, waking up, going to sleep, settling for dinner, a change in television programs. Children with an FASD don't always have the natural ability to make transitions from one emotional state, or one activity level, to another. Be prepared to help them every time.
- Break all tasks down to one step at a time. Children with an FASD can't always see the parts of a whole nor can they always understand a sequence — help them to see the parts and the order of an activity or task.

- Know that our kids often have a hard time discerning the difference between what 1 minute, 5 minutes, or 30 minutes feel like.
- Learn to distinguish between flexibility and chaos. You will have to allow for spontaneous change but that doesn't mean that you can't have a schedule that is mostly followed; you will know when to let go.

#### 4.4 Health

- Keep complex carbohydrates and proteins (e.g. whole wheat crackers, string cheese, etc.) around for regular snacks to keep blood sugars stable. Varying blood sugars will impact the child's mood so keep it stable.
- Our children need lots of exercise. Try individual sports like karate or biking. This helps with large muscle development and keeps them out of team sports that can create confusion or peer alienation.

#### 4.5 Developmental age equivalent

With most kids with an FASD, we should cut their age in half, and that is often the age they are functioning in most areas. Imagine sending a 9 year old into the real world with little to no support...

Skill	Developmental Equivalent	Age
<b>Actual Age</b>	<b>18 years</b>	
Expressive language	20 years	
Comprehension	6 years	
Money and time concepts	8 years	
Emotional maturity	6 years	
Physical maturity	18 years	
Reading ability	16 years	
Social skills	7 years	
Living skills	11 years	

#### 4.6 Relationships

- Help them with homework and school projects. This will reduce household tension in the evenings and respect the child's exhaustion level.

- Get use to feeling like you are being judged by everyone: people, other family members, medical professionals, school staff, neighbours, etc. People will give you advice that will often seem very condescending. Learn to smile and know that people mostly are just trying to help. Say something when appropriate.
- Be aware that some relationships in your life may change. You may very well be raising “that child,” the one that others don’t want around their children. Some families experienced not being invited to certain activities. Work on educating your family and friends on FASD, with hope that they will be patient and understanding.
- Talk to Elsie if you have any questions concerns or notice behaviour or health issues with the kids. This is by far the most common desire that caregivers have, to talk with another parent who “gets it.”

## 5. ON ADHD

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### ***Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)***

*Is a group of behavioural symptoms that include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Common symptoms of ADHD include: a short attention span or being easily distracted, restlessness, constant fidgeting or over activity, being impulsive.*

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Raising a child with ADHD isn’t like traditional childrearing. Normal rule-making and household routines can become almost impossible, so you’ll need to adopt different approaches. It can be frustrating and disheartening to cope with constant impulsive behaviour from your child, but there are ways to make life easier.

Parents must accept the fact that children with ADHD have functionally different brains from those of other children. While children with ADHD can still learn what is acceptable and what isn’t, their internal regulation makes them more prone to impulsive behaviour.

Fostering the development of a child with ADHD means that you will have to modify your behaviour and learn to manage the behaviour of your child. Medication may be the first step in your child’s treatment. Behavioural techniques for managing a child’s ADHD symptoms must always be in place. By following these guidelines, you can limit destructive behaviour and help your child overcome self-doubt.

### **5.1 Principles of Behaviour Management Therapy**

There are two basic principles of behaviour management therapy. The first is encouraging and rewarding good behaviour (positive reinforcement). The second is negatively reinforcing bad behaviour by following it with appropriate consequences, leading to the extinguishing of bad behaviour (negative reinforcement). You teach your child to understand that actions have consequences by establishing rules and clear outcomes for following or disobeying these rules. These principles must be followed in every area of a child’s life. That means at home, in the classroom, and in the social arena.

### **5.2 Decide Ahead of Time Which Behaviours Are Acceptable and Which Are Not**

The goal of behavioural modification is to help your child consider the consequences of an action and control the impulse to act on it. This requires empathy, patience, affection, energy, and strength on the part of the parent. Parents must first decide which behaviours they will and won’t tolerate. It’s crucial to stick to these guidelines. Punishing behaviour one day and allowing it the next is harmful to a child’s improvement. Some behaviour should always be unacceptable, like physical outbursts, refusal to get up in the morning, or unwillingness to turn off the television when told to do so.

Your child may have a hard time internalizing and enacting your guidelines. Rules should be simple and clear, and children should be rewarded for following them. This can be accomplished using a points system. For example, allow the child to accrue points for good behaviour that can be redeemed for spending money, time in front of the TV, or a new video game. If you have a list of house rules, write them down and put them where they’re easy to see. Repetition and posi-

tive reinforcement can help your child better understand your rules.

### **5.3 Define the Rules, but Allow Some Flexibility**

It's important to consistently reward good behaviours and discourage destructive ones, but you can't be too strict with your child. Remember that children with ADHD don't adapt to change as well as others. You must learn to allow your child to make mistakes as they learn. Odd behaviours that aren't detrimental to your child or anyone else should be accepted as part of your child's individual personality. It's ultimately harmful to discourage a child's quirky behaviours just because you think they are unusual.

### **5.4 Manage Aggression**

Aggressive outbursts from children with ADHD are a common problem. "Time-out" is an effective way to calm both you and your overactive child. If your child acts out in public, they should be immediately removed in a calm and decisive manner. "Time-out" should be explained to the child as a period to cool off and think about the negative behaviour they have exhibited. Try to ignore mildly disruptive behaviours as a way for your child to release his or her pent up energy. However, destructive, abusive, or intentionally disruptive behaviour should always be punished.

### **5.5 Create Structure**

Make a routine for your child and stick to it every day. Establish rituals around meals, homework, playtime, and bedtime. Simple daily tasks, such as having your child lay out his or her clothes for the next day, can provide essential structure.

### **5.6 Break Tasks into Manageable Pieces**

Try using a large wall calendar to help remind a child of their duties. Colour coding chores and homework can keep your child from becoming overwhelmed with everyday tasks and school assignments. Even morning routines should be broken down into discreet tasks.

### **5.7 Simplify and Organize Your Child's Life**

Create a special, quiet space for your child to read, do homework, and have time-outs from the

chaos of everyday life. Keep your home neat and organized so that your child knows where everything goes. This helps reduce unnecessary distractions.

### **5.8 Limit Distractions**

Children with ADHD welcome easily accessible distractions. Television, video games, and the computer encourage impulsive behaviour and should be regulated. By decreasing time with electronics and increasing time doing engaging activities outside the home, your child will have an outlet for built-up energy.

### **5.9 Encourage Exercise**

Physical activity burns excess energy in healthy ways. It also helps a child focus their attention on specific movements. This may decrease impulsivity. Exercise also improves concentration, decreases depression and anxiety, and stimulates the brain. Many professional athletes have ADHD. Experts believe that athletics can help a child with ADHD find a constructive way to focus their passion, attention, and energy.

### **5.10 Regulate Sleep Patterns**

Bedtime is especially difficult for children suffering from ADHD. Lack of sleep exacerbates inattention, hyperactivity, and recklessness. Helping your child get better sleep is important. To help them get better rest, eliminate stimulants like sugar and caffeine, and decrease television time. Establish a healthy, calming bedtime ritual.

### **5.11 Encourage Out-Loud Thinking**

Children with ADHD can lack self-control. This causes them to speak and act before thinking. Ask your child to verbalize their thoughts and reasoning when the urge to act out arises. It's important to understand your child's thought process in order to help him or her curb impulsive behaviours.

### **5.12 Promote Wait Time**

Another way to control the impulse to speak before thinking is to teach your child how to pause a moment before talking or replying. Encourage more thoughtful responses by helping your child with homework assignments and asking interac-

tive questions about a favourite television show or book.

### **5.13 Believe in Your Child**

Your child likely doesn't realize the stress they can cause. It's important to remain positive and encouraging. Praise your child's good behaviour so they know when something was done right. Your child may struggle with ADHD now, but it won't last forever. Have confidence in your child and be positive about their future.

### **5.14 Find Individualized Counselling**

You can't do it all. Your child needs your encouragement, but they also need professional help. Find a therapist to coach your child and provide another outlet for them. Don't be afraid to seek assistance if you need it. Many parents are so focused on their children that they neglect their own mental needs. A therapist can help manage your stress and anxiety as well as your child's.

### **5.15 Take Breaks**

You can't be supportive 100 percent of the time. It's normal to become overwhelmed or frustrated with yourself or your child. Just as your child will need to take breaks while studying, you'll need your own breaks as well. Scheduling alone time is important for any parent. Consider hiring a babysitter. Good break options include:

- going for a walk
- going to the gym
- taking a relaxing bath

### **5.16 Calm Yourself**

You can't help an impulsive child if you yourself are aggravated. Children mimic the behaviours they see around them, so if you remain composed and controlled during an outburst; it will help your child to do the same. Take time to breathe, relax, and collect your thoughts before attempting to pacify your child. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will become.

### **5.17 Don't Sweat the Small Stuff**

Be willing to make some compromises with your child. If your child has accomplished two of the three chores you assigned, don't worry about the

third, uncompleted task. It's a learning process and even small steps count.

### **5.18 Don't Get Overwhelmed and Lash Out**

Remember that your child's behaviour is caused by a disorder. ADHD may not be visible on the outside, but it's a disability and should be treated as such. When you begin to feel angry or frustrated, remember that your child can't "snap out of it" or "just be normal."

### **5.19 Don't Be Negative**

It sounds simplistic, but take things one day at a time and remember to keep it all in perspective. What is stressful or embarrassing today will fade away tomorrow.

### **5.20 Don't Let Your Child or the Disorder Take Control**

Remember that you are the parent and, ultimately, you establish the rules for acceptable behaviour in your home. Be patient and nurturing, but don't allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by your child.

## **6. Have fun!**

- Create some fun in every day. FASD symptoms can create a lot of tension and stress in the MK Household, so make sure you find something positive and fun in each day. It can be simple and short, but it needs to happen.
- Lots of cuddling and hugging! Your child needs the physical contact that re-enforces attachment.
- These kids are little miracles. They can be really frustrating, really often, but they are typically really fun kids who just want love and acceptance. Accept them for who they are. Consider their developmental age, instead of their chronological ages when setting expectations.
- Learn to expect chaos, issues, and challenges. Have fun and celebrate when you are wrong!

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