

FASD is preventable but there is no cure

NADINE FORD-KRITZINGER

SEEKING to boost the fight against foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) in De Doorns and the broader Hex River Valley area, the Western Cape MEC for Social Development MEC recently launched a ground-breaking initiative.

The launch, which took place on Friday saw the department partner with an NGO in De Doorns.

The initiative will see the Department of Social Development provide 10 EPWP posts to expert NGO partner, FASfacts which will use the resources to train and deploy 10 co-facilitators into the communities of the broader Hex River Valley, especially its farming communities.

The co-facilitators will run public education, awareness and anti-FASD programmes in the farming communities in the area.

They will also link pregnant mothers who may be drinking alcohol to health and counselling services.

Social development MEC Albert Fritz expressed his commitment to eradicating FASD from all affected communities.

"We will continue the fight against FASD and all other forms of substance

abuse, which is why we've allocated R96.3m to the substance abuse programme.

"Although there is no official data, our experience from work done in Hex River Valley to combat incidents of FASD, indicates that the problem may be widespread.

"This is why this initiative aims to tackle this problem head on and will provide key resources to the area."

"FASD is 100% preventable and prevention is better than cure because unfortunately FASD is 100% incurable," Fritz said.

CEO of FASfacts, Francois Grobelaar, in his address, thanked the Department of Social Development for the EPWP intern positions, as it greatly expanded the organisation's impact and reach.

Highlighting the problems FASD created in communities, Grobelaar said: "FASD poses a major challenge to the development of children and later adults.

"Research conducted in other similar farming communities such as in Robertson and Wellington, pointed to some of the world's highest FASD incidences."

nadinef@thenewage.co.za