

# Leave No One Behind: Stimulating Access to Justice for Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



## *“Building a Fairer System for People with FASD”*

Individuals with **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** and other neurocognitive impairments often face profound challenges in navigating the justice system. Limited awareness of their cognitive, memory, and communication needs can result in legal processes that are misaligned with their abilities—leading to unfair outcomes and, in some cases, increased risk of reoffending.

Led by **Professor Mansfield Mela**, this study explores both the barriers that restrict access to justice and the enablers that can improve fairness and support. With ethics approval secured from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Committee, the project is moving forward with detailed surveys and focus groups involving adults with FASD, individuals who have had direct or indirect justice system involvement (as accused persons, victims, or witnesses), caregivers, and legal professionals.

Through these engagements, the research seeks to **map the unique challenges neurodivergent individuals face in legal settings**, evaluate how accessible and inclusive current processes are, and identify opportunities for improvement. The findings will inform the development of **tailored guidelines, targeted training programs, and practical policy recommendations** for legal practitioners and law enforcement officers.

The ultimate goal is to create a justice system that is **informed, inclusive, and responsive**—ensuring that procedures are adapted to the needs of neurodivergent individuals and that no one is left behind.