

Caring Dads : Helping Fathers Value their Children

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Background and Rationale

CANADA

- Fathers are responsible for a significant portion of abuse incidents
- Fathers are investigated in 71% of physical abuse and 69% of emotional maltreatment cases
- Fathers are over three times as likely to be investigated as mothers in sexual abuse

Background and Rationale

- A severe lack of programs for fathers at-risk for child abuse
- Much of the treatment and intervention focus has been on mothers with little attention given to fathers
 - A societal and systemic bias that views mothers as more amenable to change
 - Workers may be reluctant to engage fathers in treatment and intervention

Background and Rationale

- Fathers are the ones held accountable for their abusive actions, rather than their partners or children
- Help men end the use of abusive parenting strategies,
- Appreciate the impact of child maltreatment and domestic violence on children

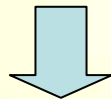
Background and Rationale

- Offers concrete recognition that, even when fathers have been abusive, their children most often value the relationship and want it to be "fixed" rather than eliminated
- Recognize attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that support healthy and unhealthy father-child relationships,

Background and Rationale

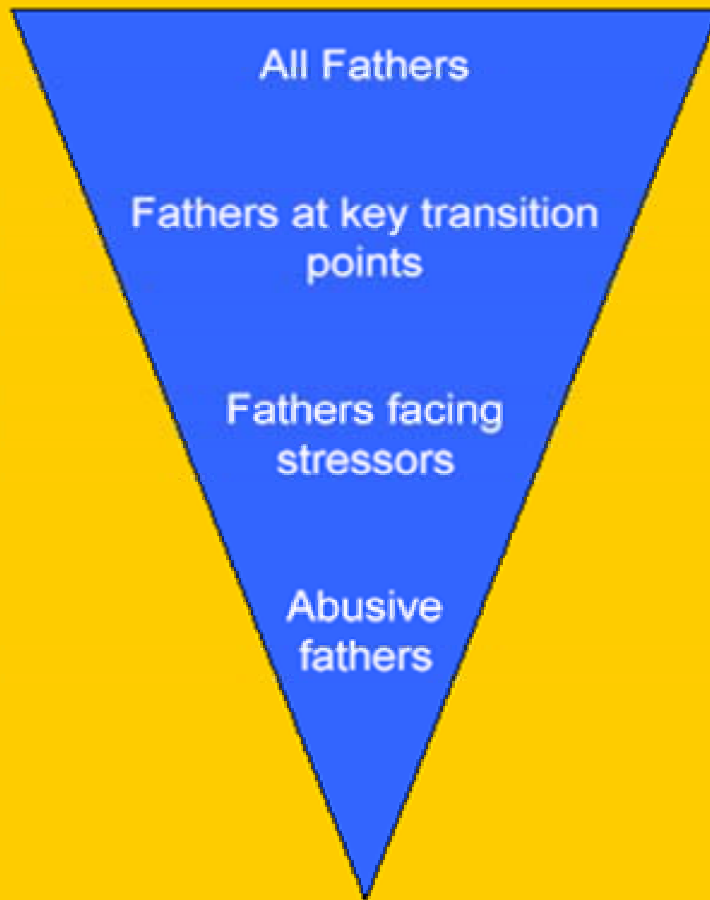
HONG KONG (CPR 2005)

- 763 newly registered cases
- Male as abuser - 65%
- Female as abuser - 35%
- Parents as abuser - 68.6% (490)



- Father as the abuser – 45%?

Locating *Caring Dads* on a Continuum of Service



Universal messages about fatherhood

Targeted programs (e.g., programs for new dads)

Supportive intervention programs (e.g., divorce)

Specialized, accountable programs

Background and Rationale

- University – community partnership
- First offered in London, Ontario and Boston in the fall of 2002
- Extended to three other locations in Ontario

Caring Dads Programme

- 17 weeks programme – 2 hours session
- Groups of approximately 12 fathers
- Co-facilitators – male/female
- Facilitators' background – abusive men's counsellor, child protection worker or women advocate
- Referred by child protective service, probation and/or parole

Goal One

- To develop sufficient trust and motivation to engage men in the process of examining their fathering
 - Men feel the need to change
 - Men recognize the benefit from learning to relate to their children in new ways
 - Men develop motivation for intervention
 - Men can be challenged

Session 1

- Orientation
 - Program overview
 - Group rules

Session 2

- Considering fathering
 - Encourage them to explore their own experience of their father
 - Genograms
 - Tell the group about their children
 - Family experience
 - Roles of being a father
 - Do the same /different as my father

Session 3

- Developing discrepancy
 - Helping men make the choice to do things differently
 - My goals – Hopes I have for my relationship with my child/children
 - Continuing to develop discrepancy
 - How I was fathered?
 - How I want to be as a father?
 - How my child experienced me?

Goal 2

- To increase Men's awareness of child-centred fathering
 - Maltreating parents may have unrealistic expectations for their children
 - Children's normal and age appropriate behaviour are often perceived as intentionally hostile or antagonistic
 - 4 components in this goal:
 - Understanding of the stages of child development
 - Understanding of their children better
 - Appreciate their children's relationships with their mothers
 - Understand that parenting involves identifying & balancing the needs of children & adults.

Session 4

- Child-centred fathering
 - Continuum of parenting behaviour



Parent-Centred/
Abusive Behaviours

Children-Centred/
Behaviours

- > *Facilitator should identify that parents have more power than children to decide where their parenting will fall on the continuum.*
 - > *be sure to include support of Children's Mothers*
- Responsive and unresponsive praise of Children (& Children's Mother)

Session 5

- Building relationships with our children
 - Review of praise
 - Examine the impact of their praise on their children
 - How it felt to praise their children
 - Reinforce the use of praise
 - Can they praise the children's mother?
 - How well do you know your kids?
 - Refer their discussion to the parenting continuum
 - To become a more child-centred parent → need to know and understand the children more
 - Due to the power imbalance in adult-child relationships, → less pressure to know and understand your children than others.

Session 6

- Listening to Children

- Listening to Children

- Introduce the concept of good listening behaviour, using of role play
 - Generate a list of characteristics of good & poor listening
 - *Spending time on listening to children → child-centred parenting*
 - Link their experience of being listened to (or not listened to) to their emotional reaction; their frustration when not feeling heard vs how children feel when not being listened to.

- Relationship building challenges

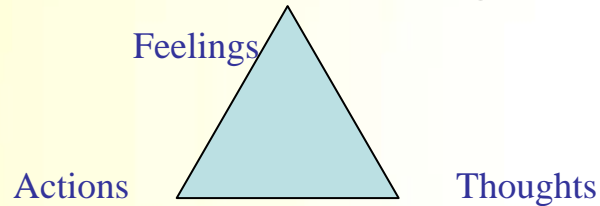
- Difficulties identified and impact on the child and their rel'p
 - A review of the child-centred parenting behaviours and a transition to more personal challenging of men's parenting choices
 - *Barriers related to Children's Mothers → impeding father-child rel'p*

Session 7

- Fathers as part of families
 - Setting a good examples
 - F-C rel'p does not exist independently of the child's rel'p with others in their lives (e.g. mother, grandparents, teachers etc.)
 - how they are, or can be, good examples to their children in the context of their rel'p with significant others.
 - **Actions & Thoughts Chart:** Help men identify **thoughts and actions** that support healthy & unhealthy rel'ps. By using same exercise, discuss how could a man set a good example in managing frustration (vs child abuse)
 - Appreciation for my children's mother
 - To reflect how well they support their children's rel'p with their mother
 - **Actions & Thoughts Chart:** How they set a good example for their children in how they communicate, or manage frustration, with the mothers

Session 8

- Eliminating barriers to better relationships
 - The connections between thoughts, feelings and actions



- Are these actions child-centred?
- any alternative thoughts?

- Thoughts and beliefs to watch out for
 - e.g If my child respected me, he would listen to me
If my child's mother would just----than this wouldn't happen

Session 9

- How are children different from adults?
 - Understanding child development
 - Lack of understanding & appreciation of their children's abilities and needs → child abuse
 - Unrealistic expectation → child abuse
 - Children's needs that relate to the stability of the rel'p between their parents
 - Practical applications
 - How thinking about their child's developmental stage may change men's thought, feelings & behaviours.

Goal 3

- To increase Men's awareness of, and responsibility for, abusive and neglectful fathering behaviours and their impact on Children by the strategies of
 - Clear Understanding of child maltreatment
 - Effective confrontation for responsibility, for empathy on children & the Mother, for inconsistent information.

Session 10

- Recognizing unhealthy, hurtful, abusive and neglectful fathering behaviours
 - The other end of the continuum: child maltreatment
 - Behaviours that fall at the abusive/parent-centred end of the continuum & the impact on children
 - When possible, challenge men to personalize their e.g. by taking responsibility for their own behaviour.
 - Be sure to include abuse of others close to children as a form of child maltreatment
 - A closer look at emotional abuse
 - Identify the thoughts & feelings of the abusive parents & the needs of children

Session 11

- How am I responding to my children's needs?
 - Emotional abuse and neglect as forms of abuse
 - Case discussions
 - Insults are Not Motivational
 - Ask men to think about their experience of being insulted, rejected etc. their feelings? Want to be closer to the person who did that to him?
 - Put them into the shoe of their children
 - Remind them to avoid double set of beliefs
 - Problem-solving for parents exercise
 - 1. situation
 - 2. intention—child or parent needs?
 - 3. thoughts, feelings and actions triangle
 - 4. effects
 - 5. alternatives

Session 12

- Relationship with my child's mother
 - Problem-solving for parents continued
 - What children learn from abusive and controlling fathering
 - The importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries between parent & children
 - e.g. relying on children for emotional support, using children to mediate or send messages in adult disputes.
 - Men's inappropriate use of the legal system to punish the child's mother (e.g. arguing for change of custody due to minor issues, calling police when disagreeing to partner's parenting choice.

Session 13

- Problem-solving in difficult situations
 - Problem-solving for parents continued
 - Keep adding to the list of alternatives to parent-centred behaviours
 - Abuse of children's mother
 - Brainstorm different problems with using power & control tactics with children
 - What children learn from Abusive & Controlling Fathering?
 - Consolidate what they have learned before

Session 14

- Decreasing denial and minimization
 - Shame and secrecy
 - Shame prevents men from taking responsibility for their abusive behaviour
 - To help men move from feeling shame about the self to feeling guilt for particular actions
 - Effect of denial on children (& on the children's mother)
 - Problem-solving for parents continued
 - Men evaluate their progress in using these steps

Goal 4

- Consolidating learning, rebuilding trust, and planning for the future
 - Continued distinction between guilt & shame
 - Termination Work
 - Increasing men's awareness of other sources of support & supporting help-seeking norms

Session 15

- Rebuilding trust and healing
 - Taking responsibility for the past and moving into the future
 - Talking with children about past abuse & parent-centred choices
 - » Benefit to talk about this
 - » What child need to hear you say?
 - Rebuilding trust that do not involve direct communication
 - .g. being consistent in moods and behaviours, continuing to work to improve their fathering using other resources in the community, providing a predictable and safe environment etc.
 - How they will know when the children have begun to trust them more?

Session 16

- What about discipline?
 - Summarizing alternatives to punishment
 - Other child management options
 - » Changing parental demands
 - » Arranging the situation so that this argument doesn't come up
 - » Encouraging/supporting child's positive behaviours
 - » Using natural consequences
 - » Understanding & meeting the child's underlying need
 - Defining discipline
 - Present a definition of discipline
 - Review behaviours from men's list that do not fall into the above list of strategies
 - Stress the differences in method and outcome of abuse and discipline

Session 17

- Wrapping up
 - Review of main concepts
 - The parent-centred to child-centred continuum
 - The thoughts, feelings and action triangle
 - Listening to, praising, & nurturing children
 - Developmental stages
 - The definition of child abuse
 - The Problem-solving for Parents steps
 - Talking with children about past abuse
 - Alternative ways to manage problems with children
 - Where am I going from here?
 - Community resources available for parents
 - Informal sources of parenting support
 - Brainstorm a list of action the men can take if they are not sure if their behaviours and expectations are reasonable, e.g.
 - » Ask your child's teacher, watch your child's friends, ask other parents, go to the library to search for books on parenting etc.