

# Caring Dads : Helping Fathers Value their Children

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# Background and Rationale

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## *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

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- 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

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- 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

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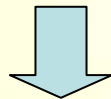
- Offers concrete recognition that, even when fathers have been abusive, their children most often value the relationship and want it to be "fixed" rather than eliminated
- Recognize attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that support healthy and unhealthy father-child relationships,

# Background and Rationale

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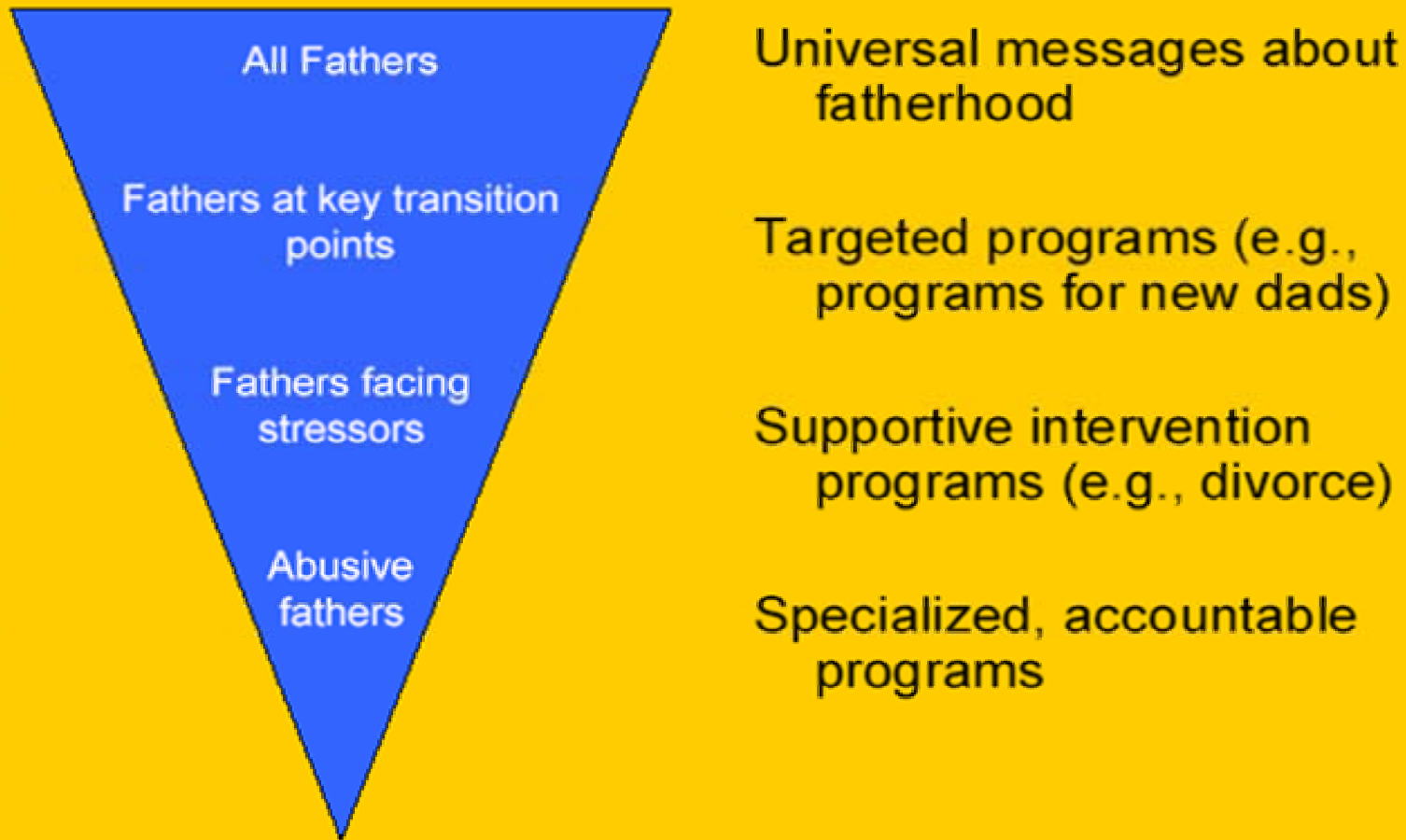
## ***HONG KONG (CPR 2005)***

- 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



# Background and Rationale

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- Orientation
  - Program overview
  - Group rules

# Session 2

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

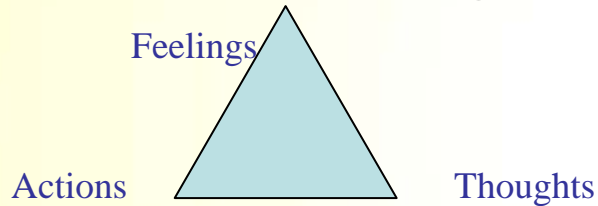
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- Fathers as part of families
  - Setting a good examples
    - F-C rel'p does not exist independently of the child's rel'p with others in their lives (e.g. mother, grandparents, teachers etc.)
    - how they are, or can be, good examples to their 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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.