**Caring Dads Service Response to COVID-19**

**Individual Engagement Strategy**

Best practice advice from the Caring Dads developers in Canada during the COVID-19 crisis stipulates “our main goal is to contribute to the safety of women and child victims of men’s abuse. At this time of crisis, we need to provide crisis work that is responsive to the specific risks men pose to women and children.”

The intention of individual work by phone with fathers during the COVID-19 pandemic is to provide **support** and increase **safety** for families in a time of elevated risk, through regular person-centred engagement with fathers by phone. Change-work, as per the normal Caring Dads groupwork program, is not a realistic expectation at the current time. Instead Caring Dads interventions will focus on:

* Making a connection so that the father has someone to reach out to and so that his partner is not the only one bearing the load of risk.
* Ask questions that allow you to assess and monitor men’s risk to their families. This includes thinking about recent and current stressors that men and their families are facing.
* Working with men to understand their risk to others and to counter this with prosocial desires such as being a good father, keeping their relationship, avoiding arrest, etc.
* Collaborating with men and, as needed, with other social service providers to manage and reduce dynamic risk (e.g., support implementation of harm reduction strategies in substance using men, address immediate housing needs, “talk men down” from revenge and anger)
* Providing as much practical support as you can to help manage immediate stress. Service could include helping fathers to complete applications for wage subsidies, access food banks, etc *(from Caring Dads Canada’s COVID 19 practice* *advice)*

In addition to direct practice with fathers, we should continue to contribute to the safety of those impacted by his use of violence through:

* collaborative case management with other service providers
* maintaining engagement with adult victim survivors to monitor dynamic risk factors and review safety plans and support needs

**Session Structure**

Telephone/video call sessions will need to remain flexible and responsive to client needs. The outline below is intended as a guide to support practitioners to focus on support and risk management rather than change work.

1. **Private space** – does the father have a private space and the time to talk?
2. **Explore impact**
	1. **On himself** - discuss the impact of the pandemic on him (e.g. physical & mental health, stress, job loss, changes to custody or access with children, financial stress, feeling confined, bored). Screen for mental health concerns and suicide where appropriate.
	2. **On children** – discuss any changes in children’s behaviour, encourage him to consider his children’s experience (e.g. loss of contact with grandparents, friends, changes to school, routine, impact of family stress on children) and what they need from him.
	3. **On relationship with mother/other caregivers –** discuss how the pandemic is impacting on his relationships with significant people in his children’s lives. How is he supporting his children’s mother at the moment?
3. **Focus on safety –** normalise stressors while encouraging him to focus on pro-social goals that increase safety, such as avoiding breaches, being a good dad, maintaining a safe relationship with his partner, and utilising appropriate informal and formal supports to keep himself safe.
4. **Explore strengths and support needs -** how is he coping with the impacts of the pandemic? Are his usual sources of support and coping strategies available to him? Does he need information or advice about any additional supports, strategies etc – in terms of the pandemic, his mental health and his ability to remain calm and ensure the safety and wellbeing of himself and his family?
5. **Problem-solving and practical help** – are there any specific issues (practical or otherwise) that we can help him with?
6. **Next appointment –** arrange date and time for next phone contact. Encourage father to reach out in the interim if needed.

**Support Services**

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| Coronavirus Hotline – 1800 675 398 | Mensline – 1300 789 978 |
| Men’s Referral Service – 1300 766 491 | Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636 |
| Lifeline – 13 11 14 | Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467 |
| Kids Help Line – 1800 551 800 | Family Relationships Advice Line – 1800 050 321 |
| Parentline – 1300 301 300 |  |