

Caring Dads Manifesto



The Values that Define our Program

We commit that the primary aim of Caring Dads is to enhance the safety and well-being of children.

Men's participation in Caring Dads must have the potential to benefit children regardless of fathers' progress, or lack of progress, in making change. Meeting this aim requires that Caring Dads has active and ongoing collaboration with professionals who have direct contact with the children of fathers involved in intervention. In the majority of cases, this commitment precludes involving fathers who have no contact with children in the Caring Dads group.

We recognize that children's safety and well-being is integrally connected to the safety of their mothers. It is therefore impossible to responsibly address parenting without simultaneously addressing men's abusive actions towards children's mothers.

Among fathers, perpetration of woman abuse very often co-occurs with child physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect and vice versa. Children whose fathers perpetrate both domestic violence and child maltreatment are at greater risk for severe, chronic and lethal abuse. Caring Dads commits to recognizing and addressing the possible overlap of child maltreatment and domestic violence. This includes assessing and monitoring men's risk of abusing children's mothers, contacting children's mothers for information, referral and safety planning, and including an evaluation of the extent to which men are able to develop and maintain a respectful co-parenting relationship as part of ongoing and final evaluation of his progress through the program. It also includes active collaboration and cooperation with interventions directly focused on men's abuse of women so that fathers can be referred to such interventions before, after or simultaneously with Caring Dads, as necessary for each father.

We work towards ensuring that our interventions to end family violence place appropriate responsibility on fathers to keep their children safe.

We are brought together, in part, by recognition that our current systems of interventions often allow fathers who have perpetrated child abuse or neglect or who have abused children's mothers to avoid taking responsibility for the effects of their violence on children or for taking actions necessary to ensure the future safety and well-being of their children and their children's mothers. We believe that models of service that exclude fathers are not in the best interests of children and mothers, or of fathers themselves.

We use a gendered lens in our understanding of the impact of men's violence in intimate relationships.

We recognize that although men and women may both use violence in their intimate relationships, women are much more likely to be victims of violence that is severe, fear-producing, injurious and potentially lethal.

We commit to working together across agencies and sectors to ensure that Caring Dads complements and enhances existing efforts to end men's use of violence in their families.

The Caring Dads program was developed to complement existing efforts to end child maltreatment and women abuse. It is not a replacement for, or alternative to, programs designed to address men's use of violence against women. Care must be taken within communities to ensure that the Caring Dads program works collaboratively with interventions to address domestic violence in a way that maximizes potential benefit to victims of men's abuse.

We understand that for the abusive, neglectful, domestically violent and high-risk fathers entering our service, the need to enhance child-centred fathering takes precedence over teaching child management skills.

We see abusive fathers' lack of recognition and valuing of their children's needs for love, respect, and autonomy as paramount, not their lack of skills in child management. Therefore, Caring Dads puts emphasis on helping men better understand and prioritize their relationship with their children and, by extension, their children's mothers. An intervention target is to help men ensure that their contributions to parenting their children are positive and healthy. Caring Dads makes a principled commitment to avoid teaching any child management or discipline strategies that include punishment (e.g. time-out, counting to consequences etc.)

We commit to work collaboratively in active partnerships with other professionals involved in men's families to share information, monitor changing levels of risk levels, and address escalation as quickly and efficiently as possible.

There is an inherent danger in failing to provide service to high risk men. Although not all men are good candidates for Caring Dads, it is important that someone engage them in intervention where their risk can be assessed and monitored and where increases in risk can be addressed. As part of the primary value we place on ensuring the safety and well-being of victims of men's abuse, Caring Dads commits to working together with other professionals to engage men in appropriate services, share risk-relevant information, and contribute to efforts to quickly and efficiently address escalation in men's risk to those around him.