



Caring Dads: Helping Fathers Value Their Children

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Caring Dads Program

- Started in 2001 at Changing Ways in London Ontario Canada
- 2002 Emerge (Boston) became an early pilot site
- 2003 Expanded to 4 additional sites in Ontario

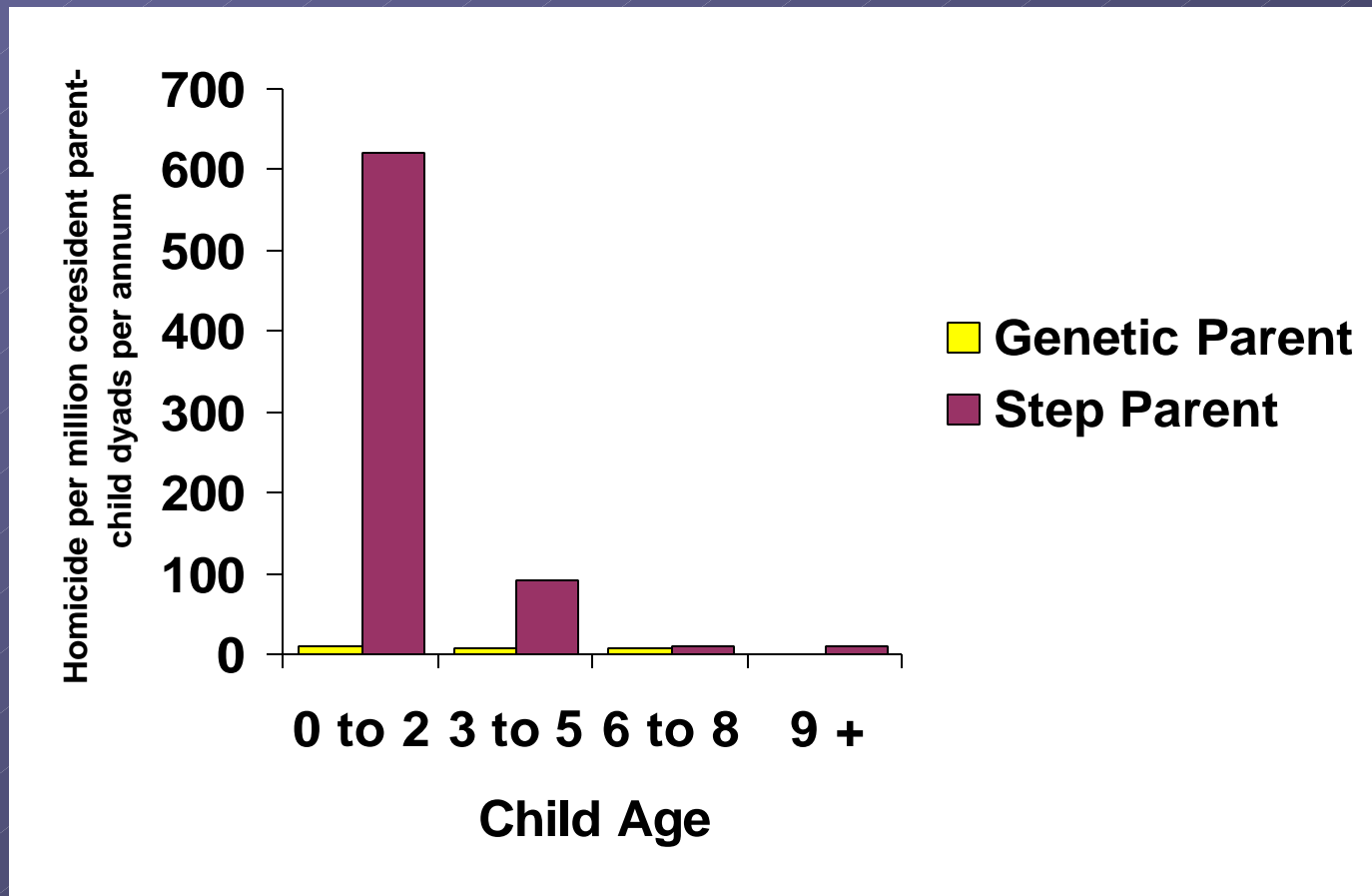
Caring Dads Program

- A high number of men referred to Changing Ways for abuse in intimate relationships were also identifying as fathers
- Changing Ways January-December 2004
 - 454 men referred through courts or community
 - 338 self identified as fathers
 - 516 children involved with our clients
 - 104 clients involved with child protection

The Value of Intervening with Maltreating and At-risk Fathers

- Providing intervention to fathers has the potential to increase paternal accountability and responsibility
- Fathers who leave one family seldom end their involvement with children in general
 - By age 4, the odds of abuse for children with a step-parent in the home are 2.6 times as high as for children with two biological parents *Radhakrishna et al. (2001)*

Children killed by parents in Canada, 1974 to 1992



Daly & Wilson (2000)

The Value of Intervening with Maltreating and At-risk Fathers

- **Fathers seldom leave the emotional landscape of their children** Peled (1998)
 - children missed their fathers
 - children often experienced a conflict of loyalties
- **Providing intervention may be in the best interests of children in a variety of ways**
 - program support for child protection orders
 - Intervention program can provide independent support and feedback to child protection

Cautions for working with maltreating fathers

- use of program to gain leverage in custody and access
- use of program material to harass children's mothers
- funding of program at the expense of services addressing the safety needs of women and children

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Many maltreating and abusive fathers present overly controlling behavior, a sense of entitlement, and self-centered attitudes
 - thus, the development of child management skills should not be an initial focus of intervention

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Intervention focus must be on abuse of the child and counter the attitudes that support the abusive behaviour and focus on the development of their capacity to support their children's emotional and physical needs (Crooks et al, unpublished)
- The focus of the intervention must be the abusive and maltreating fathers **lack** of recognition and prioritizations of children's need for love, respect, security and autonomy-- *Not* their inability to control their children's behaviour. (Crooks et al, unpublished)

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Interventions with maltreating and abusive fathers must consider the experience of the children's mother and address the relationship between abusive fathers and the mothers of their children.
- Men's abuse of children's mothers must be recognized and addressed as part of intervention for fathers.
 - Because women may also be victims of men's abusive behavior, outreach must be offered to provide women.

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Intervention must be completely clear that abuse of children includes abuse of children's mothers
 - "I can't really do anything to her – she bruises so easily if I just grab her. I have hit her – she got a black eye. It was just a left jab. I didn't even hit her hard. She played that up, wore it like it was a badge."
 - "I was pissed off at her, so I took her to court to get custody to get her back for her mind games."
 - "I get their mother to take care of the discipline. I'm more laid back."

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Interventions with abusive and maltreating fathers must address abuse through systematic undermining of the mother-child relationship
 - “I tell them not to listen to their mother.”
 - “If she asks I tell her I don’t trust her mom, I don’t love her.”

Critical Principles for Intervention with maltreating and abusive father

- Men are not initially ready for change
 - Programs must be integrated in a system that can enforce the intervention
 - Partnerships between intervention, child protection and criminal justice system are crucial
 - Intervention must not work in isolation of broader community
 - Intervention must be vigilant of collusion

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