Invisible practices: Working with fathers who use violence

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CFCA Webinar
22 July 2020

Please note: The views expressed in this webinar are those of the presenters, and may not reflect those of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, or the Australian Government.
Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting.

Recommended support services include:
- 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- MensLine – 1300 78 99 78.
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• **Authors**
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• **Investigators and researchers**

• **Collaborating organisations**
  – including Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, which created an umbrella and support for the participating community sector organisation in Victoria
  – government departments in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia
  – The Safe & Together Institute
Challenges:
• Recognising two victims
• Keeping fathers who use violence visible
• Working with complexity

Considerations:
• Conflating safety with separation
• A gender neutral response
Our research questions

• What do practitioners require from their (or other) organisations to support them in working with fathers who use violence?

• What principles guide the work with fathers who use violence and abuse?
Work stops, a period of training ensues (frequently offsite …), after which employees return to the workplace to put new knowledge into practice (not always with sterling success). Billions are spent annually on training following this model.

(Wagenaar & Cook, 2011, p. 25).
Key elements of an authorising environment included:

- Senior management support
- Acknowledgement of the need to refocus the work in the DFV area
- Prioritising worker training, coaching and peer support
- Greater attention to worker safety
Themes of Communities of Practice

- General engagement skills with male caregivers/fathers
- Partnering with women
- Building relationships with children
- Balancing the focus of interventions (fathers, mothers, children) in the context of collaborative (multi-agency) working
- Worker safety

- Organisational issues and the sustainability of building capacity through practitioners
All-of-family responses involve:

• Working with each family member in the context of their family, extended family or community

• Individuals not necessarily seen together unless safe to do so

• Men are in view, children are seen, women are recognised as victim/survivors and mothers
Working with fathers involves:

• Pivoting to the perpetrator
• Exploring, assessing and documenting
• Assessing father’s parenting in the same way as mother’s
• Sharing the information with the ‘right’ services
• Using the Safe & Together mapping tool
- Assessing the threshold for ‘engagement’
- Assessing change processes
Pivot to the perpetrator of DFV

• Focus on the father’s parenting and expectations of him as a father – not the relationship between the parents
Prepare for the interview

- Gather information from multiple sources
- Clarify purpose for the interview
- Rehearse
- Attend to worker safety
- Be respectful, avoid arguing ‘the facts’
- Help him understand his behaviour in relation to his parenting

- Focus on father’s strengths but point out contradictions
- Ensure safety of the mother and children (women must know that the interview is to occur)
- Support less experienced workers
Establish rapport, avoid collusion

- Listen to adult survivor about when, how, if to engage with the father using violence
- Build rapport but without colluding (avoid automatic validation of father’s efforts unless directly benefiting the children and family functioning)

Example questions:
- What kind of dad do you want to be?
- How did you learn about the pregnancy?
- How did you decide to be a father or take a fathering role?
- Would you like to talk to me about how people treat you as a father?


• Practitioners can tell us more about what is working ‘on the ground’ and the challenges ahead.
Housekeeping

- Webinar recording will be available on the AIFS & ANROWS website next week

- Please complete the survey that will pop up as you exit the webinar, we really value your feedback

- The research report and practice guide for Invisible Practices are available on the ANROWS website.
Continue the conversation…

Please submit questions or comments on the online forum following today’s webinar: