

## **Guiding Principles for Fantastic Fathers**

Before collaboration begins, each entity must examine how it *supports or doesn't support* the following guiding principles...

### **Safety**

- The safety of women and children is our first priority.
- All interventions involving children who have witnessed or experienced violence should be guided by the voices of the non-abusive parents.
- Fathers who have used violence need close observation to mitigate unintended harm.
- This initiative does not endorse nor encourage any relationship between the offending fathers and their children or parenting partners.

### **Honouring Men**

- Fathers (and father figures) are important to children and children are profoundly affected by their fathers, for better or worse.
- Working with fathers is an essential piece of ending violence against women and children.
- It is possible for some violent men to renounce violence.
- Relationships damaged by violence are sometimes reparable. Some men can be helped to achieve constructive and healing relationships with their children.

### **Context for the Work**

- Honour the mother/child relationship.
- Fathers have a responsibility to respect children's rights.
- Abuse is a deliberate choice and a learned behaviour and can be unlearned.
- The reparative process between abusive fathers and their children often is long and complex and is not appropriate for all men.
- Parenting is a process of lifelong learning and practice.
- Important to acknowledge underlying factors contributing to abusive behaviour but not to use an excuse for abusive behaviour.
- In family violence intervention, there must be critical awareness of the cultural context in which parenting happens. Cultural identity is never stagnant but is always changing. There is no cultural prerogative for abuse.
- Our own practice must reflect the notions of non-violence and respect that we promote in our work.
- Seek first to understand then to be understood (S. Covey).
- These guiding principles will evolve over time.

### **Collaboration**

- This initiative must be continually informed by the experiences of battered women and their children.
- Coordination among providers of family violence services is essential.