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**Editor's Note:** The following research will be released at the Society for Prevention Research ([www.preventionresearch.org](http://www.preventionresearch.org)) 2004 annual meeting, May 26-28, 2004.

## **CAN CHILD-ABUSING FATHERS BECOME CARING DADS?**

### ***Researchers Recognize Lack of Services for Fathers-at-Risk***

- Can abusive fathers be taught to value their children?
- Should policy makers focus on abusive fathers or on their children? Who should get the services of government agencies?
- Are men capable of learning to improve father-child relationships in group settings?

Fathers are responsible for a significant proportion of child abuse, both in the United States and in Canada, according to national figures. Yet, fathers have rarely been the focus of either intervention or prevention efforts. Most such interventions and government services are directed toward women and children as victims of abusive fathers.

But high-risk fathers often leave one family and go on to another, raising the risk of abusing a new set of children, especially existing children in the new family. Can these fathers be helped?

A group of experts at the Society of Prevention Research's annual meeting will present information about a new Canadian program aimed at helping fathers become better parents. Called Caring Dads, the program runs for 17 weeks, bringing the fathers together for two-hour sessions each week. "Most men who attend the program don't want to be there and don't see the need to be in the program. That is the biggest challenge," according to one of the researchers. But eventually they begin to learn to change their behavior, from that of a parent-centered father to that of a child-centered father. They learn to rebuild trust and gain skills in solving problems and in countering their own poor behaviors. They begin to understand that they cannot be both a good dad and a bad husband.

Reporters interested in attending a Caring Dads session should call Arlyn Riskind or Ellen Wilson at 301-652-1558. Sessions are held in the U.S. and Canada.

*Source: Katreena Scott, Ph.D., University of Toronto; Claire Cooks, Ph.D., and Karen Francis, M.A., University of Western Ontario.*