

Caring Dads

Eligible fathers:

- Physically or emotionally abused, neglected, and/or exposed their child(ren) to violence, and acknowledge they need to be better fathers.
- Have current access with their child(ren) and reside in Victoria.
- Have or be willing to have MARAM completed.
- May have their own history of trauma.
- May have criminal history but no reports of child sexual offences.
- May have mental illness or AOD concerns, but these are managed.
- Are able to sit in a group setting for two hours.
- Eligibility is further determined during a screening interview.

How to refer:

- Referrals are being accepted now for ongoing groups in both Wangaratta and Wodonga
- Referrals can be made to omcasaintake@cav.org.au or 03 5722 2203
- We accept referrals from individuals and from external referrers.
- Our service will be seeking information relating to parenting history, including current IVOs, Family Court or Children's Court orders.
- CAV will be advocating for participants to have active case management and for case managers to be actively engaged with Caring Dads facilitators.

There is no fee for this program. The group runs 2 hours weekly for 17 weeks.

We work with fathers for the benefit of their children and significant others in their lives. Focus is on fathers' accountability, countering attitudes linked to abusive and neglectful behaviors, and promoting healthy relationships between fathers and their child(ren) and other parent/carers. Program principles emphasize the need to enhance father's motivation, promote child-centered fathering, respectful, non-abusive co-parenting and recognise the children's experience of trauma. The program uses a combination of motivation enhancement, parent education and cognitive behavioural therapy to improve recognition and prioritisation of child needs, respect and support for children's relationships with other parent/carers, listening and using praise, empathy for children's experiences of maltreatment and to identify and counter the distortions underlying fathers' past, and potentially ongoing, use of family violence.

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Additional Information about the program

Caring Dads was created in partnership with the University of Toronto (Canada) in the fight to end domestic violence. Caring Dads is an internationally-implemented leading perpetrator-based program that is unique in its focus at the intersection of domestic violence and fatherhood. Caring Dads was developed in collaboration with child protective services, batterer intervention programs, children's mental health agencies, women's advocates, centers for children and families involved in the justice system, family resource agencies and probation and parole services.

University of Melbourne conducted a 3-year evaluation over three sites in Victoria between 2017-2020. Results included:

- Positive impact on fathers' parenting and co-parenting practices
- Reduced risk of children's further exposure to domestic and family violence
- Increased ability for fathers to identify the impact of their aggressive behaviour on their children

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5979881e03596e118c9cadcb/t/5f204494aaf6161c035250b2/1595950231917/2020+Caring+Dads+Final+Report+3-3-2020.pdf>

The program seeks to include collaboration with the children's other parent/carers. This could include:

- Contact with children's parent/carer by CAV staff or other professionals to ensure everyone is informed about the program, safe and free from coercion.
- Collaboration between professionals and parent/carers to anticipate and mitigate potential negative consequences of fathers' involvement in intervention.

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