



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members Board of Health	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> February 6, 2012	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Parenting Program Changes (BOH12001) (City Wide)	
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<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**Council Direction:**

N/A

**Information:**

This report describes upcoming changes in parenting services for fathers, and the rationale behind these changes. Rather than deliver targeted programs for fathers only, which have been poorly utilized, staff time will be realigned to parenting programs that are available for both parents, and ensure these are welcoming for fathers. Further details are provided below.

**Current Services**

Currently the Family Health Division of Public Health Services uses 0.15 FTE of Public Health Nurse time to provide two drop-in services for dads, the Dad's Group and Dad and Me.

The Dad's Group occurs weekly on Tuesday evenings at the Ontario Early Years Centre located at Wesley Urban Ministries Incorporated; 155 Queen Street North. The service is a drop-in program in which a Public Health Nurse teaches fathers about parenting.

Dad and Me involves drop in sessions which have historically occurred on Saturday mornings and facilitate learning through play between fathers and their children.

### ***Changes to Services***

The Dad's Group and Dad and Me will be discontinued in spring 2012. The Public Health Nurse time will then be used to:

1. Work in collaboration with the Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Children's Aid Society, develop a parenting series that targets high risk parents or those who have links with the Children's Aid Society, based on the Incredible Years parenting series, and pilot the newly developed series in the Fall of 2012; and,
2. Explore community collaboration to implement an evidence based, comprehensive parenting program called Triple P.

### ***Reasons for the Change***

Attendance at the Dad's Group has been low. In 2011, numbers at the Dad's Group have ranged from one to nine with an average of five fathers per session.

Requests for the Dad and Me program have been low. Starting in September 2011, Ontario Early Years Centres have had the option to choose sessions for their sites. No requests for sessions were made in 2011. Before July 2011, sessions were offered monthly at the Ontario Early Years Centre at Wesley Urban Ministries on Queen Street North. Of the six sessions offered in the first half of 2011, attendance was zero for two sessions and they were subsequently cancelled. Three sessions were completed, with four or fewer parents in attendance at each session.

Neither The Dad's Group nor the Dad and Me programs are evidence based. Although based on sound theoretical frameworks, the sessions are not based on programs that have been evaluated or researched and shown to make a difference in parenting style or child outcomes. While an evaluation using focus groups in 2006 showed an increase in knowledge and confidence, there was no evidence that this subsequently leads to changes in parenting behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

The Dad and Me group facilitates play time between the father and child. Public Health Staff have more expertise in health promotion, building community capacity and collaboration, social marketing, facilitating adult groups and addressing determinants of health. Facilitating play is not the best use of Public Health Nurse time and this need can be more efficiently and appropriately met by Early Childhood Educators and similar staff of other organizations.

The alternative, Incredible Years Program is evidence based. Research has shown the programs provides benefits to both parenting and child behaviour.<sup>2,3</sup> Feedback from

Incredible Years facilitators suggests a need for an Incredible Years series that targets high risk parents.

### ***Impact on the Public and Fathers***

It is anticipated that this change in service will better meet the needs of fathers. The current services for fathers are used significantly below capacity and the actual number of fathers served is relatively small; only 33 new fathers accessed the Dad's Group in 2011. Other community groups also provide drop-in Dad and Me groups that fathers in Hamilton can utilize. Generally, the fathers that do attend the Dad's Group are high risk dads that are associated with child welfare and therefore their needs would be better met by a more intensive evidence based program such as the Incredible Years Series to be developed, described above.

### ***Conclusion***

Public Health Services constantly strives to find efficiencies and increased effectiveness within programs. These changes have been developed based on the needs of our community, examination of the evidence and collaboration with partner agencies. Shifting resources from the Dad's Group and Dad and Me sessions towards the development of an evidence based parenting series and collaboration towards an effective comprehensive parenting program will advance services and be more effective in improving parenting within Hamilton.

### **References:**

1. City of Hamilton, Department of Public Health Services, 2006. *Applied Research and Evaluation. Fathering Groups pilot project evaluation.*
2. The Incredible Years. Evidence of effectiveness. Available at <http://www.incredibleyears.com/ResearchEval/effective.asp> (accessed on January 6, 2012)
3. Webster-Stratton C. Long term follow-up of families with young conduct problem children: from preschool to grade school. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 1990;19(2):144-149.