# Engaging with Fathers Den Haag 2006

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# What we have learnt from 15 years of work in Men's Health, Boy's Health and Education and through

The Engaging Fathers Project

# THE ENGAGING FATHERS PROJECT APPROACH

The goal: Fathers involved with children

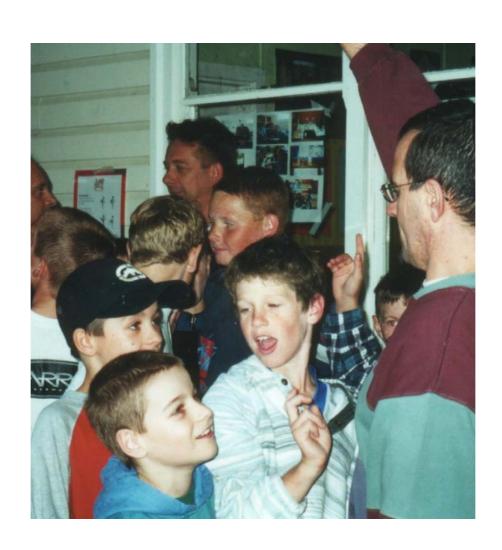
The strategy: Services involve fathers

The bottom line: Children's well being

#### Can services engage with dads?

- Schools
- Early Childhood
- Indigenous
- Antenatal and postnatal
- Community

# Yes it is possible



#### Sometimes it is... "Wow"



#### It involves risk



### Real Life Evidence



# the payoff...







#### FOUR BIG ONES

- Environment
- Communication
- Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes
- Policy and Protocols

# Check your environment: PHARMACIES AS A CASE STUDY

# HOW CAN A PUBLIC VENUE NOT BE MALE-FRIENDLY?

- Male Female Differences in Pharmacy Use
- Ten pharmacies randomly selected
- Sixty Hours of observation

BEHAVIOUR	Females per 100 males
Enters Premises	170
Asks Pharmacist Question	120
Ask Assistant Question	200
Buys Item	260
Picks up Item	300

#### DISPLAYS

Measured square metres

Coded into Baby, Neutral,
 Female and Male





#### RESULTS

- Male items 30 square metres
- Female items 339 square metres
- A ratio of 1 to 11.3

#### FOUR BIG ONES

- Environment
- Communication
- Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes
- Policy and Protocols

### KNOWLEDGE FOR STAFF

- About father-infant attachment
- Purpose why involve the men?

#### We think dads should connect



## **BUT HOW EARLY?**



## **ATTACHMENT?**



# Ongoing work with new fathers

- Antenatal classes
- Home visiting
- Postnatal Depression Group
- WEB and Email support research project

#### What do new fathers need?

- From the research
  - sleep & settling
  - Breastfeeding
  - -PND

From an attachment perspective

# Knowledge Gap



#### Fathers don't know about...

- brain growth
- self regulation
- attachment
- The father's influence on development

## **Attachment Gap**



#### Fathers don't experience

- Holding relationship
  - -(midwife)
- attachment mentoring
  - (Home visiting)

## Knowledge for staff to use Father-infant Attachment



#### From the research...

Q1. Is mother-infant attachment the template for father-infant attachment?

Ans: No

van IJzendoorn and de Wolff (1997)

# Q2.Does father-infant attachment influence development?

#### On measures of:

social competence, emotional regulation, empathy, school readiness, sibling conflict, behaviour problems...

- A2. For Strange Situation Procedure: No
- A2. For Adult Attachment Interview: No

## Three responses

- 1. More time with infants
- 2. Buffering effect
- 3. Look more deeply

## Three responses

- More time with infants
   No evidence
- 2. Buffering effect
- Lots of evidence
- 3. Look more deeply
- New paradigms

#### Father-infant attachment buffering

#### **Best outcome:**

Mother-infant secure

Father-infant secure

#### **Next best:**

Mother-infant secure

Father-infant insecure

#### **Next best:**

Mother-infant insecure

Father-infant secure

Worst: both insecure

# Q3. How does father-infant attachment form?

- Sensitivity is not the only predictor (not even for mothers)
- Fathers play behaviour
- Feldman (2003) fathers role in coregulation of positive arousal

#### LOOKING MORE DEEPLY

- Dads distinctive interaction
- Dads role in social development
- Dads role in via
  - 1. unconscious (oedipal)
  - 2. emotional and cognitive regulation (neurology)
  - 3. spiritual (Indigenous)

#### Dads distinctive interaction



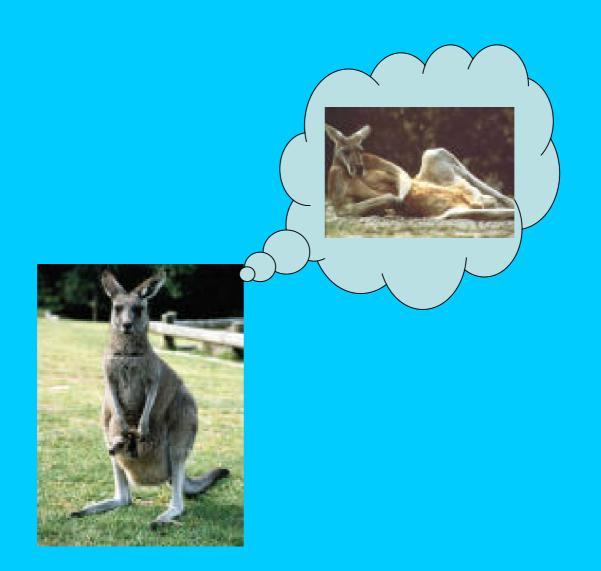
## Dads role in social development



#### Dads role constructed by mother



#### Dads role constructed by mother



# New Father's Role for the well being of infant

- Connection to the infant
- Support the mother
- Deal with the outside world
- Find their place in the primary triangle