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## Fathers are ‘dadvocates’ for men-only discussion groups at antenatal education classes

As dads become more hands on with sharing parenthood duties, St George and Sutherland Hospitals are looking for fathers to pass on their knowledge to new dads.

Following the success of the men-only sessions of the Early Parenting Program, which was developed across St George and Sutherland Hospitals and the Royal Hospital for Women, more fathers are needed to share their valuable knowledge to assist in the antenatal education programs.

Ian Harris, dad to Sophie age three, and Ethan age one, brings his parenting skills and experience to the fore as one of the father facilitators of the Program.

“The men-only discussion groups allow fathers to engage with each other and to share experiences, enabling a ‘male perspective’ on pregnancy and childbirth.

“Fathers play a significant role in supporting their partners in childbirth, encouraging breastfeeding and contributing to the development and wellbeing of the child,” Mr Harris said.

“Changes in community attitudes towards childbirth and childcare have seen the role fathers play in families as extremely important. Changing patterns of parents in the workforce has resulted in an expectation of greater parental sharing of childrearing activities.

“Many first time fathers attend the men-only sessions which provide an important opportunity to engage new fathers and encourage a more active parenting role.

“Topics of discussion include: how pregnancy has been until now; getting involved with the pregnancy; birth plans (options available, communicating with partner and being flexible) and parenting responsibilities,” he said.

Helen Rogers, Early Parenting Program Coordinator, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, said the group provides an avenue for men to express a range of feelings about becoming a dad, without compromising their partner’s need for support.

“We are now looking for interested men who are fathers, with group facilitation skills, to share their valuable knowledge by facilitating one hour sessions at St George and Sutherland Hospitals,” Ms Rogers said.

If you would like more information on becoming a father facilitator, or for information on the Preparation for Parenthood Program (male only and mixed gender sessions) contact Helen Rogers on 9382 8685 or [Helen.Rogers@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Helen.Rogers@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au).

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