

Story vignettes

The following story vignettes are used to trigger case discussion. The 'Can Do' for CALD People unit has two story vignettes to allow participants to explore issues that arise for CALD people with mental health and substance use issues from various perspectives.

The trigger questions for each story are to direct discussion and lead participants to think how they would include and support this mother and her child through their service and how they would access other relevant services.

Facilitators have additional discussion questions and notes for each story vignette.

Story A – Jafar

Story B – Poni

Story vignette A – Jafar

"I am so grateful to be in Australia and to be able to work. Before we arrived here from Sudan we had to stay in a refugee camp for two years. That was very hard, as we were still dealing with the killings and the disappearance of my father. As the oldest son it was my responsibility to take care of my mother, brother and four sisters.

It was hard not being able to speak English, and people did not understand what we were running away from. I had many nightmares in the early days and my mind would go back to the horrors. I couldn't sleep for a long time. It was better when we left the refugee camp because I found a few drinks at night helped me get to sleep. Now the problem is waking up in the morning. There have been some mornings when I have not woken up for work – it has caused problems because three other families rely on me to take them to the job.

We have worked picking fruit and pruning for growers. I have been very reliable getting other Sudanese people to the properties to work, but lately I am finding it harder and harder with the early morning starts as I am so tired all the time. The growers are grateful for our help as the work is hard and tedious. We have many smoking breaks to stop the monotony. My family try to stop me from smoking so much because they worry for my health. I just don't like how much the cigarettes are costing each week."

Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues for Jafar?
2. How would you prioritise the risks to Jafar?
3. If Jafar was telling you this story, how would you engage with him?
4. What interventions maybe useful?
5. What particular challenges might there be in managing Jafar?
6. What support could local health services offer?
7. How could Jafar be effectively managed using the services and resources in your local area?

Story vignette B – Poni

Poni is Jafar's mother.

"Poni means 'second born girl' in my language. It is all so different here, the food, the language, the cars, everything. For years we lived in the camps, the men were fighting and killed. But the women had each other.

I have five children – except for the two boys they have never known their fathers. The children seem to find it easier to settle than me. They pick up English better, make friends, play games. Jafar is working and bringing in some money which helps. But I can't settle. I feel afraid and alone.... The Church has found us a house now, but the people in the street have not welcomed us. They just look away and whisper.

The children need to go to school to learn and have a better life, but I don't know how to get them there. One of the children has a problem with her heart and I need help for her too. But it is all very hard and I don't have the energy.

Now I have bad headaches, and I feel dizzy all the time. There is something wrong with my head. The doctor gave me strong painkillers for the pain - they help me feel less afraid. Now I buy alcohol and that makes me feel better too."

Points for discussion

1. What issues are challenging Poni in Australia?
2. What issues would be of most concern to health professionals?
3. If Poni was telling you this story, how would you engage with her?
4. What interventions maybe useful at this stage?
5. What particular challenges might there be in managing Poni?
6. What support could local health services offer?
7. How could Poni be effectively managed using the services and resources in your local area?