

## Story vignettes

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The following story vignettes are used to trigger case discussion. The 'Can Do' for Families and Carers unit has two story vignettes to allow participants to explore issues that arise for families and carers of 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 person through their service and how they would access other relevant services.

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

Story A – Mary

Story B – Lee

## Story vignette A – Mary

*"Some days I just want to pack my bags and go. I'm so tired and worn out. I have two young kids, and they have both had terrible asthma. They've had lots of admissions to the local hospital, and they're on all sorts of puffers. My mother lives with us and she used to be able to help, but she is getting frail and doesn't remember things so well now.*

*Then there's my husband, Joe – he's been impossible. He had a job as a storeman, but lost it six months ago. The drought has had been really bad for the town, there aren't as many jobs any more. Then he went and got injured on the footy field - he hurt his neck and shoulder, so he couldn't work even if there was a job, and he always has pain.*

*He gets into these black moods, with the pain and everything. He uses weed for the pain and he's drinking.*

*I'm so tired and stressed - I can't look after him and the kids, and be expected to look for work. I worry about the money all the time. I went to Centrelink and that's keeping us going, but I don't know for how long. I want to do a budget, but Joe isn't interested. I told him we can't afford the dope or the grog any more. He just argues whenever I mention it. The other day he really scared me, he'd been drinking and said he thought we'd be better off if he just drove into a tree. I don't know what to do any more."*

### Points for Discussion

1. What do you think are the important issues here for Mary?
2. How do you think she is coping?
3. If Mary was telling you this story, how would you engage with her?
4. What role might the general practitioner play in supporting Mary?
5. What professionals, services might also be able to assist Mary?

## Story vignette B – Lee

*"I am so grateful to be in Australia. When we first arrived from Cambodia we had to stay in a refugee camp for 2 years. That was very hard, as we were still dealing with the disappearance of my father. As the oldest son it was my responsibility to take care of my mother, brother and sisters. I have a job and a wife now.*

*My mother died two year ago. That was hard on all of us because we had been through such a lot. My younger brother, Sok, took it really hard, and he started getting into the wrong crowd. This was very bad. He is using too many drugs now and he has been in trouble with the law. He even stole from my sisters and me. It is so hard - I try and help him and he gets angry. But I have to keep trying – it is my duty.*

*I am very worried about him. He would get very angry and call me bad names when he was on the drugs, but now he is saying someone is giving him bad drugs and is spying on him. What if his head has been affected by the drugs? I don't know what to do."*

### **Points for Discussion**

1. What are the key issues for Lee?
2. What does the story tell you about Lee and his family?
3. If Lee was telling you his story, how would you engage with him?
4. How might the stigma of mental illness affect Lee and his family?
5. What support and assistance might help Lee?
6. What services might become involved in assisting Lee and his family?