

Adult Protective Services: Case Planning

The Story of Eva

Eva is a 74-year-old widow who lives in a small 2-bedroom mobile home in a senior mobile home park. Eva uses a walker to ambulate and is currently receiving help from a home care agency with bathing, housework and grocery shopping. She has one good friend, Myrtle, who lives nearby but is otherwise isolated. She has one child and no living siblings. She called APS to ask for help dealing with her 52 year-old son, Gene, who is pressuring Eva to let him move in with her. Here is what she tells you:

“Thank you so much for coming. I am just beside myself. I do not know what to do. I love my son and I want him to be in my life but I am also afraid of him.

Gene never could hold a job for very long because he tends to talk back to anyone giving him orders. He really doesn't like people telling him what to do. And, he has always drunk too much. But, before his father kept him in line at home, before he died.

After Gene's father died, Gene decided that he was the man-of-the-house and that he should be in charge of everything, including me. He felt that my money was his money since he paid all the bills (something his father did before he died). We have lots of arguments about how money should be spent. For example, he thought beer was a necessity but my blood pressure medication wasn't important. He'd get really mad when we argued, he'd slam out of the house and go drinking.

Three years ago, he used all of my savings to buy a new car and then he totaled it one month later when he was drinking. In the accident, he hit another car and the woman in that car was badly hurt. Gene was hurt, but was arrested and put in the jail ward of the hospital. He spent nearly a month in the hospital and he now walks with a cane. He spent a year in jail for driving under the influence and then moved back home with me. He is disabled and can't work. And, he has chronic pain.

Things have been worse since he came back home from jail. He developed an addiction to pain pills, and didn't care whether there was food in the house or whether bills got paid. He only cared about his drugs. And, if I said anything or complained, he would fly into a rage. He would throw things at me. He punched holes in the walls. Once he pulled a knife on me and told me that he wouldn't have to listen to me complain if he cut my throat. I was terrified. I felt like a prisoner in my own home, afraid to ask for a decent meal or a moment of peace. It was very hard on my nerves. And, I never got much sleep because he would have friends in and run the TV all hours of the night. Some nights I almost wished he would cut my throat so I could have some peace.

A couple of times you folks (APS) came to the house but I always turned the social worker away. It is so embarrassing to have to admit that your own child would treat you so horribly. Or that your parenting was so bad that you raised a child who could be so mean. I felt like a failure as a mother and a human being. I didn't tell anyone about the terror I was experiencing in my own home.

One night, about 6 months ago, Gene wanted me to give him all my jewelry to sell, even the engagement ring that his father gave me. I refused and he threw me against the wall. I hit my head and was unconscious for a time. A neighbor had heard the fight and called the police. When I came to, the police and paramedics were here. Gene was gone and so was my engagement ring. The police had a victim advocate help me to get a restraining order so Gene couldn't come back.

The restraining order is still in place but Gene has been calling the house asking to come home. I have been trying to stay strong since my life is so much more peaceful these days. There is food in the refrigerator and my bills are paid on time. But, Gene has been living on the streets and he sounds awful. He was in the hospital last month with an infection in his bad leg and a social worker called me to see if he could be released to my house. I felt terrible saying no. I felt like such a bad mother. I mean, who turns away their sick child? Gene is back on the streets now. He promises that he isn't using drugs anymore. He keeps calling and begging to come home. What should I do? I really want to help him but I am afraid to have him come home. Should I give him another chance?