

## CASE STUDY

# Collaborating to recognise and address conduct disorder

### Aaron's story

Aaron is a 15-year-old boy who was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) at age seven.

When Aaron was younger he would always play very rough and was constantly throwing and breaking toys. It was not uncommon for house windows to be broken and holes to be kicked in walls.

Aaron lives with his biological mother, Lisa and stepfather, Jon. Aaron's biological father was a heroin addict and rarely saw him as a child because he was in and out of prison. His stepfather and mother fight a lot and Jon has been known to hit Lisa on regular occasions which is often in the presence of Aaron.

Lisa is an alcoholic and as a teenager was a heavy marijuana smoker and occasional cocaine user. She smoked throughout her pregnancy with Aaron. Lisa often has angry outbursts and it is not uncommon for her to be yelling at Aaron using abusive language and putting him down, frequently cursing at him "you are a useless piece of shit, Aaron". When she is really angry she throws things around which Aaron finds very scary.

At age seven Aaron was referred to a paediatrician who prescribed Ritalin. He was also referred to a

psychologist who worked with children. At first, the medication seemed to help but getting him to take it every day was a demanding task for him and his mother. Due to resistance to comply and his parents' poor finances, Aaron only took the medication for a period of six months and he refused to see the psychologist after four sessions.

Over time Aaron's behaviour became progressively worse with angry outbursts toward teachers, his parents, and regular fighting in the schoolyard. At age 12, Aaron started skipping school.

When reprimanded at school for fighting Aaron refuses to apologise and frequently walks out of detention. Frequent attempts have been made by the school to contact his parents but these attempts failed. Aaron's school attendance is getting worse and the teachers are at a loss on how they can communicate with his parents and improve Aaron's situation. Over time, Aaron's academic results decline.

At age 13 his favourite past time was walking around his neighbourhood setting bins alight. Since age 14 Aaron has been attending parties every weekend, drinking and smoking marijuana and occasionally having sex with girls he meets at the parties.

One night when his mother was yelling at him to do his homework, he went to the kitchen and grabbed a knife and held it to her throat, threatening to kill

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her. When his mum asked him to apologise the next day he said “you deserve everything you get, you fat bitch”. Aaron rarely expresses guilt or remorse following these delinquent acts. Lisa decided one day that things were getting out of hand so took Aaron to the GP with her. She explained to the GP what has been happening over the past 18 months and reporting that she has tried to stop him going out so much but that Aaron manages to sneak out when they have gone to sleep. The GP gave a referral for Aaron to a psychiatrist.