

Scenarios for Practicing Screening

Scenario #1

Virginia is a 28 year old single Hispanic mother of two young children. She has a history of mental health issues since she was a teenager – mostly depression that has been treated with medication and counseling in the past following a suicide attempt where she took a bottle of pills and then called 911. The treatment helped her in the past and she has had no recent suicide attempts.

Virginia's mother has been helpful and supportive, but recently remarried and has been less available to help Virginia. Virginia's oldest child, Jesse, age 4 was recently dismissed from the child care center for behavioral problems and Virginia had to miss work to care for him. Her paycheck will not cover the upcoming bills and she is concerned she will be evicted. Even if she is not evicted, she is fearful that she will not be able to hold on to her job as she doesn't know what to do with Jesse during the day. She is feeling overwhelmed.

Virginia has had sleeping difficulty for the past few weeks and everything seems to be closing in on her. She is having anxiety attacks day and night. She is not currently on medication, has not been in therapy for three years and has had "crazy" thoughts about the children being better off without her. She does feel like killing herself but does not have a plan to kill herself. She was tearful and panicky on the phone and states she feels like disappearing.

Scenario #2

Keith is a 20 year old college student who was recently diagnosed with schizophrenia. He was hospitalized, started on medications, but quit taking them because he couldn't stand the side effects. He'd rather medicate himself by smoking pot. He continues to hear voices and is not able to pay attention in his classes because he feels tormented by the voices. His grades, which were always straight A's, are dropping and he may end up failing this semester.

He is embarrassed by the voices and by his diagnosis and feeling hopeless that he can ever finish college, get a job or function as an independent adult.

He lives at home with his parents and 2 younger brothers. They are concerned about him and have noticed that he is much more withdrawn from them. They live on a farm and they hunt, so there are guns in the home. One of the guns belongs to Keith and he has refused to let them take it from him. That's when they brought him in to be evaluated by crisis. He says he would rather be dead than to be dealing with these voices and flunking out of school. He reports that he has had the gun to his head several times, but has been afraid to pull the trigger. He loves his family and doesn't want to hurt them.