

Case Vignette – Walter

Walter is a 32-year-old college educated man. He stated that he was recently divorced because his wife was fed up with his “mood swings.” He admits to sometimes “flying off the handle” and hitting his wife & children on occasion when he was drinking. Walter is presently living with an acquaintance he met at his bartending job. Children and Youth are involved because Walter’s ex-wife noticed bruises on the children (ages 4, 6) after a weekend with their father. The children claimed to mom that dad took them along to the bar and got mad when they complained they wanted to go home.

Walter, the youngest of four children, has had very little contact with his siblings. His parents divorced when Walter was five and both of Walter’s parents are now deceased. While Walter was in college, his father died from liver complications associated with alcohol use. Walter stated that while he was growing up, his father was a heavy drinker who occasionally physically abused the children while drunk. Walter admits that he is sometimes a heavy drinker, has had a history of several drunken driving arrests and, after episodes of heavy drinking, sometimes has memory lapses. Walter has lost five jobs in two years due to attendance problems and inconsistent job performance. He says that everyone in his profession experiences high job turnover. On his current job, his co-workers have covered for him when he was late or intoxicated on the job. Walter has made efforts to cut down on his drinking and now will avoid hard liquor and drink only beer. He is certain that he can control his drinking if he just tries a little harder not to overindulge.

Questions:

Is Walter at high risk for developing an alcohol problem? Why?

How has Walter been enabled?

What are some examples of the denial process?

Do you think Walter’s efforts to cut down on his drinking will be effective?

How would you use this case in supervision with your workers?
