

The Johnson Family Case Study:

Alan Johnson, age 45 (African American) has been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder since the age of 25. He graduated from college with a BA in Business and had a successful career when he met his wife and married at 23. After the first two years of marriage, Sara, now age 43, (Caucasian) became increasingly concerned about her husband's erratic behavior. He was working on his Master's degree in business and Sara was pregnant with their first child when her husband's behavior changed. He did not sleep more than two hours a night, he worked 12 hours a day and he spent money excessively. At the time, he was promoted and encouraged by his employer to 'keep up the good work' because he seemed so productive.

After a few years, Alan's behavior began to impact his work performance (he was disheveled and irritable at times), which led to his first hospitalization.

When Alan was 37 years of age, and after 10 hospitalizations, his employer, who finally understood about his illness, encouraged him to apply for disability. Over the couple's 22 years of marriage, they had four children: David, age 20, Sam, age 14, Sally, age 9, and James, age 6.

The children have a tenuous relationship with their father because of his erratic behavior. The 14 year old has been missing school without a written excuse for the absences. Both younger children have been identified by the school as possibly having a diagnosis of ADHD because of their 'out of control' behavior in the classroom. Many times the children attend school stating they have not eaten breakfast because their mom was working and dad was still in bed.

There have been occasions that the couple separated due to Alan's violent and erratic behavior. Mrs. Johnson tried to balance caring for her children, working as a nurse, and taking care of her husband.

On several occasions, Mr. Johnson has been reported to threaten his children and wife and has been known to physically harm (no medical treatment needed) his children while in a manic episode. Children and Youth was involved with the family at those points of time. The result has always been hospitalization and medication stabilization.

At the present time, Children and Youth has opened the case for on-going services due to Sam missing school without an excuse (44 out of 88 school days) and the lack of pre-school care reported by the younger children and their "out of control" behavior at school.