

Case Study – Samuel

- Samuel is a 77-year-old male who was recently hospitalized following complications from diabetes, including dehydration.

Adult Protection Concern

- Following Samuel's discharge home, the social worker received a call from Samuel's neighbour expressing concern about Samuel's health issues and ability to continue to live safely and independently on his own.
- The neighbor reported Samuel has no known family or visitors.
- Samuel's response to the neighbour dropping by with an occasional meal has been met with suspicion. The neighbour states Samuel will open the door and accept the meal but not invite the neighbour inside.
- The neighbour has observed Samuel's disheveled appearance.
- The neighbour reports the home appears unclean with a strong odor.

An Adult Protection (AP) Report is screened in under the Adult Protection Act:

- A home visit was completed with Samuel by the social worker. Upon arrival, Samuel reluctantly allows the social worker to come inside.
- The neighbour's concerns are validated as the house is very unclean with a strong odor.
- Samuel's clothing is soiled and his hair, hands and face appear unwashed.
- Samuel engaged in a conversation with the social worker re: the concerns expressed by the report source, however, Samuel dismissed these concerns.
- Samuel refused to consider any form of home support.
- Samuel stated he has no problem taking care of himself and his home. When asked specific questions about how he does this, he was unable to answer.
- Samuel was able to state he has diabetes, which he identified as "under control with needles."
- With Samuel's consent, the social worker consulted with his family physician following the home visit. The physician stated she has concerns about Samuel's cognition and his ability to maintain independent living, especially his management of his diabetes. She noted Samuel has missed his last two appointments with her.

End of Evaluation Phase

- The social worker felt that there were areas of Samuel's day-to-day life where he did not appear to understand / appreciate the risk. He was unable to explain how he managed to live safely and independently. The physical evidence within his home as well as his disheveled appearance contradicted his statement that he can manage. The comments by Samuel's physician about his management of his diabetes raised further concerns.

- At the end of the Evaluation there were many unanswered questions and the risks associated with alleged self-neglect were not mitigated. A decision was made to proceed with an adult protection investigation to assess the situation further and to specifically complete a formal capacity assessment to determine whether Samuel can understand and appreciate the risks associated with self-neglect.

Capacity Dilemma:

1. Does Samuel have the capacity to decide whether he can live independently without any home support?
2. Does Samuel have the capacity to manage his medical condition?