



2013 Annual Awards Entry Form
(Complete one for each entry.)

Entry Name Hoarding Initiatives Task Force

HFA MassHousing

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Entry form with description, check(s), and visual aids (optional) must be received by NCSHA by **Monday, July 1, 2013**.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA _____

Entry Name _____

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Special Achievement Hoarding Initiatives Task Force

MassHousing believes strongly that in order to create healthy and sustainable housing communities, the Agency must actively address the challenges raised by social issues including: drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, developmental disabilities, homelessness prevention, violence prevention, as well as aging related issues. Over many years, MassHousing has developed training and programming with its public and private partners in housing and social services to address and manage these issues more effectively. The Agency's latest efforts in this area are now focused on hoarding.

The Challenge

Hoarding is a critical issue in affordable housing today – and perhaps one of the least understood. Specifically, hoarding is the acquisition of large numbers of items and then the inability to discard these items even when they appear to others to have no value. Hoarders create living spaces that are sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude the actual activities for which those spaces were designed. For example, this manifests in tenants who have so many items accumulated in their kitchens – and on their kitchen tables – that they may find themselves eating their meals on a small corner of the table – or on a tiny flat surface in another area of the unit. It is estimated that hoarding affects 5% of the population statewide. It is a serious health and safety issue, not only for a person who hoards, but also for neighbors, housing managers, service providers and public safety officials. For example, neighbors may experience issues with rodents and other bugs which are drawn to the piles in the hoarder's apartment, public safety officials often find the challenge of reaching a tenant who requires medical attention but whose apartment makes it virtually impossible to enter. It is an understatement to say that hoarding is a costly problem that does not go away on its own. Ultimately, many individuals who hoard will end up homeless as their habits, if left unresolved, are incompatible with tenancy. This also increases costs and challenges for property owners who may have to spend thousands of dollars in court costs to secure an eviction – after which they face the added cost of cleanout and damage repair.

A Multi-disciplinary Approach to a Multi-disciplinary Issue

In keeping with its collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to complex issues like hoarding, MassHousing has aggressively undertaken a series of initiatives by partnering with knowledgeable, experienced and dedicated professionals in the fields of housing, social work, academia, health care, mental health, elder affairs, housing law and public safety. MassHousing also believes that while policy directives and financial and other resources may come from the state level, the hands on success takes place locally.

As such, MassHousing worked to establish a Statewide Steering Committee on Hoarding (SSCH) in order to bring together the various stakeholders on this issue. MassHousing now chairs this Steering Committee whose goals include: educating statewide players to the problems of hoarding; engaging these players to work collaboratively to implement practical solutions to hoarding issues, and; supporting the efforts of local Hoarding Task Forces throughout the state. The SSCH's membership includes national experts on Hoarding including: Dr. Gail Skekete, Dean of the Boston University School of Social Work, Dr. Randy Frost of Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, Dr. Christiana Bratiotis of the University of Nebraska, Dr. Jordana Muroff, also of Boston University, and Jesse Edsell-Vetter of the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership as well as a myriad of state and local collaborators of varying professions. The SSCH has evolved and now serves as a vehicle for the creation of new ideas and

most importantly for communicating details of the many initiatives that are active throughout Massachusetts. These initiatives include:

- developing and implementing the *HOMES*[®] risk assessment;
- establishing and maintaining a hoarding resource website;
- ongoing education and training programs;
- support of direct programs, including a therapeutic de-cluttering program and a harm reduction hoarding initiative; and most importantly,
- providing technical assistance to Local Hoarding Task Forces.

Risk Assessment

Led by MassHousing, to date, the SSCH has accomplished significant strategic objectives since its creation. First, is the implementation of the *HOMES*[®] *Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment*. *HOMES*[®] is an innovative and easy-to-use tool that allows users to identify hoarding risks as they relate to **H**health, **O**bstacles, **M**ental health, **E**ndangerment (to children, elders, or persons with disabilities), and **S**tructural and safety issues. *HOMES*[®] identifies each of these risk factors on a two-page form and provides structure to a formal assessment of a hoarding situation. This new multi-disciplinary risk assessment tool was developed with input from the various stakeholders and has now been successfully put into practice. Specifically, *HOMES*[®] provides a structural measure through which the level of risk in a hoarding environment can be conceptualized. This is achieved by providing an initial and brief assessment of the nature and parameters of the hoarding problem including a visual scan of the environment and a detailed conversation with the person(s) in the home.

The tool can be used by housing managers, health departments, elder services, Department of Mental Health or Department of Children and Families' workers or anyone who, at first encounter, believes a hoarding issue is present. The standardization of the assessment of a hoarding problem is critical as it establishes a framework from which everyone works. *HOMES*[®] also allows these individual specialists to conceptualize issues that may traditionally be outside of their purview. For example, a service provider may not recognize the risk of eviction and homelessness, and a housing provider may be less attuned to certain health risks. Understanding the variety of risks posed by hoarding helps everyone involved make a more global assessment of the factors that are at play. Following the *HOMES*[®] assessment, a plan from which further action may be taken can be organized and could include immediate intervention, additional assessment or referral. Since the creation of *HOMES*[®], MassHousing has had many requests from agencies across the country to copy and use the *HOMES*[®] assessment tool in their work.

Website and Resources

Another important objective and tool is the statewide Hoarding Resources webpage hosted and updated by MassHousing. This site is a repository for all the information that a service provider or other stakeholder may need relative to the issue of hoarding. Included as part of the site is a list of upcoming events such as support groups, trainings or fundraisers, updated hoarding resources, tools and assessment forms, Massachusetts specific resources including local Task Force information, Massachusetts codes and legal information as well as links to self-help, treatment and more. The site is found at www.masshousing.com/hoarding. On this site, stakeholders can also post training, research and treatment opportunities or list themselves or others in the Housing Resource Directory, a four part directory of resources from Clinicians to Cleanouts that is one of the most comprehensive resources on this issue anywhere in Massachusetts.

Training

To date, the SSCH has organized over 50 trainings. These trainings are offered through MassHousing's existing Tenant Assistance Program (TAP) and have been attended by over 3,000 professionals including those in public health and safety, court personnel, housing managers, clinicians, social service professionals and others. Earlier this year, MassHousing and the SSCH co-sponsored yet another hoarding conference of significance in Greenfield, Massachusetts which boasted attendance over 200 and also included people who hoard.

Additionally, a new comprehensive hoarding training curriculum including basic and upper level hoarding courses has been established as part of MassHousing's TAP Management Training Program. A day-long training entitled, Hoarding Basics: What You Need To Know About Hoarding, is offered as an entry level course. Beyond that are four half-day second-level courses which are made available to those who have taken the basic level training. These courses each focus on a particular aspect of hoarding, including: Effective Communication with a Person Who Hoards, Legal Issues Related to Hoarding; and two effective intervention courses, one Intervention: Approaches to Cleanouts and the other, Intervention: Assessment and Plan Development. MassHousing is pleased to note that this new curriculum has doubled the ongoing training opportunities.

Program Initiatives – The Reach Beyond

The SSCH and MassHousing partner and contract with Community Health Consulting on a “therapeutic de-cluttering” program which has been piloted in a few different areas of the state. With clinical support and supervision, case managers trained in hoarding provide services on site in the apartments of people who hoard. Assessment of this ten week treatment module indicates slow, but successful progress, helping to avoid build up from becoming a crisis situation while at the same time working to maintain safe tenancies.

The second initiative which has been born out of the this work is Greater Boston Hoarding Initiative now operated by the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership in collaboration with Bay Cove Human Services' Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP). (TPP is a homelessness prevention program funded by MassHousing that works with tenants facing eviction as a result of behavior related to a disability.) (Note: the new DSM V – the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association – characterizes hoarding as it own mental disorder for the first time.) TPP functions as a neutral party to the landlord and tenant. In consultation with the Housing Court Department, TPP works with the property owner and tenant to determine whether the disability can be reasonably accommodated and the tenancy preserved. Utilizing a harm reduction model that complies with housing inspection standards has assisted 275 tenancies of people who hoard every year. The success rate is amazing – with housing court eviction and homelessness prevented in all but six tenancies.

Local Hoarding Task Forces

The number of local Hoarding Task Forces has grown from seven in October of 2007 to twenty-two in May 2013. The growth in part is due to free start-up technical assistance to new task forces, including on-site assistance provided by the SSCH and MassHousing. With this, two experienced members provide planning and implementation assistance to task forces statewide. Local task forces are now responsible for a wide variety of activities. A recent *New York Times* article by Jan Hoffman on May 26, 2013 credits the work of task forces as effective in addressing hoarding and provides an exceptional overview of the program's accomplishments.

HOMES[®] Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment

Health

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot use bathtub/shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot prepare food | <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of spoiled food | <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of insects/rodents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot access toilet | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot sleep in bed | <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of feces/Urine (human or animal) | <input type="checkbox"/> Presence of mold or chronic dampness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage/Trash Overflow | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot use stove/fridge/sink | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot locate medications or equipment | |

Notes: _____

Obstacles

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot move freely/safely in home | <input type="checkbox"/> Unstable piles/avalanche risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability for EMT to enter/gain access | <input type="checkbox"/> Egresses, exits or vents blocked or unusable |

Notes: _____

Mental health (Note that this is not a clinical diagnosis; use only to identify risk factors)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does not seem to understand seriousness of problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Defensive or angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaware, not alert, or confused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does not seem to accept likely consequence of problem | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious or apprehensive | |

Notes: _____

Endangerment (evaluate threat based on other sections with attention to specific populations listed below)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threat to health or safety of child/minor | <input type="checkbox"/> Threat to health or safety of person with disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threat to health or safety of older adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Threat to health or safety of animal |

Notes: _____

Structure & Safety

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unstable floorboards/stairs/porch | <input type="checkbox"/> Leaking roof | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical wires/cords exposed | <input type="checkbox"/> No running water/plumbing problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flammable items beside heat source | <input type="checkbox"/> Caving walls | <input type="checkbox"/> No heat/electricity | <input type="checkbox"/> Blocked/unsafe electric heater or vents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage of hazardous materials/weapons | | | |

Notes: _____

HOMES[®] Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment (page 2)

Household Composition

of Adults _____ # of Children _____ # and kinds of Pets _____
Ages of adults: _____ Ages of children: _____ Person who smokes in home Yes No
Person(s) with physical disability _____ Language(s) spoken in home _____

Assessment Notes: _____

Risk Measurements

Imminent Harm to self, family, animals, public: _____
 Threat of Eviction: _____ Threat of Condemnation: _____

Capacity Measurements

Instructions: Place a check mark by the items that represent the strengths and capacity to address the hoarding problem

- Awareness of clutter
- Willingness to acknowledge clutter and risks to health, safety and ability to remain in home/impact on daily life
- Physical ability to clear clutter
- Psychological ability to tolerate intervention
- Willingness to accept intervention assistance

Capacity Notes: _____

Post-Assessment Plan/Referral

Date: _____ Client Name: _____ Assessor: _____

HOMES[®] Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment

Instructions for Use

- **HOMES** Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment provides a structural measure through which the level of risk in a hoarded environment can be conceptualized.
- It is intended as an *initial* and *brief* assessment to aid in determining the nature and parameters of the hoarding problem and organizing a plan from which further action may be taken-- including immediate intervention, additional assessment or referral.
- **HOMES** can be used in a variety of ways, depending on needs and resources. It is recommended that a visual scan of the environment in combination with a conversation with the person(s) in the home be used to determine the effect of clutter/hoarding on **H**Health, **O**bstacles, **M**ental Health, **E**ndangerment and **S**tructure in the setting.
- The Family Composition, Imminent Risk, Capacity, Notes and Post-Assessment sections are intended for additional information about the hoarded environment, the occupants and their capacity/strength to address the problem.

TAP Management Trainings

Hoarding Training Descriptions

7-10-12

Hoarding Level 1: What You Need To Know (C)

Hoarding presents a number of challenges for property managers, resident service coordinators, service providers, public health and legal officials. This Level 1 course covers the many facets of addressing hoarding: the definition, prevalence, demographics, characteristics, course and manifestations; the hoarding model and mental health issues; reasonable accommodations; assessment; motivational interviewing; intervention techniques; and community collaboration. Case studies offer a chance to apply new skills and ideas about community partners who can assist with intervention.

Note: This course is a prerequisite to all other MassHousing TAP hoarding courses.

Instructors: Sarah Dowal, LCSW, Institute for Aging Research, Hebrew SeniorLife, and Jesse Edsell-Vetter, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

Date and Time: _____ 8:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Location: _____

Parking: _____

Hoarding Level 2: Effective Communication Level 2 (C, H)

A second-level course for property managers, resident service coordinators, service providers, public health and legal officials offering a more detailed look at effective communication with someone who hoards - the change process and enhancing motivation to change; motivational interviewing; coping with resistance and strong emotions; impediments to effective intervention and how to overcome them; communicating effectively as part of a team addressing the resident's hoarding.

Note: The course *Hoarding Level 1: What You Need to Know* or the equivalent is a prerequisite.

Instructor: Elizabeth Burden, Lemuel Shattuck Hospital

Date and Time: _____ from 8:45am to 1:00pm

Location: _____

Parking: _____

Hoarding Level 2: Intervention - Assessment and Plan Development (C)

The foundation for any effective hoarding intervention is a clear assessment of violations and development of a realistic intervention plan. This workshop will feature case studies and photographs to practice assessment skills. Additionally,

participants will practice the development of realistic intervention plans; determine appropriate services and effective communication among providers participating in the intervention.

Note: The course *Hoarding Level 1: What You Need to Know or the equivalent* is a prerequisite.

Instructor: Jesse Edsell-Vetter, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership

Date and Time: _____ 8:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Location: _____

Parking: _____

Hoarding Level 2: Legal Issues (C)

This second-level course is for property managers, resident service coordinators, and service providers who want to sort out the legal issues that provide the framework for an effective intervention. When does all the “stuff” become a lease or code violation? When is the person entitled to a reasonable accommodation? What does that accommodation entail? How is effective lease enforcement accomplished in a hoarding situation? How do these legal concerns fit into a positive working relationship among everyone involved? Not all these questions have black and white answers but this workshop will provide a framework to figure out what the laws require.

Note: The course *Hoarding Level 1: What You Need to Know or the equivalent* is a prerequisite.

Instructor: Ann Anderson, ADA Housing and Services

Date and Time: _____ from 8:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Location: _____

Parking: _____

Hoarding Level 2 Intervention - Approaches to Cleanouts: (C, H)

This second level course will cover a range of cleanout interventions from full cleanouts to gradual work. Attention will be given to the handling of situations where cleanouts are necessary. Learn the pitfalls of full cleanouts, and the importance of groundwork. Details on how to structure cleanouts will include groundwork, small-scale practice, teamwork, and creating organization and safety. The importance of supportive people to help the hoarder make their own decisions and practice discarding will also be explored. **Note: Hoarding Basics -**

Note: The course *Hoarding Level 1: What You Need to Know or the equivalent* is a prerequisite.

Instructor: _____

Date and Time: _____ from 8:45am to 1:00pm

Location: _____

Parking: _____

May 26, 2013

Task Forces Offer Hoarders a Way to Dig Out

By JAN HOFFMAN

YORBA LINDA, Calif. — Wet rag in hand, the older woman was trying to clean her filthy, packed garage to comply with a warning that she was violating city codes. As two officials approached to check on her progress, she proudly pointed to an open box in which she had placed two dead rats.

For maximum display, she had perched the box atop one of the garage's many dense, waist-high piles: bins overflowing with clothes and cans, a bicycle frame, a mildewed mop.

Darren Johnson, an inspector with the Orange County Fire Authority, and Mary Lewis, a city code enforcement officer, smiled encouragingly. They maneuvered into the woman's townhouse, its passageways blocked by the detritus of a troubled life. Both are members of the [Orange County Task Force on Hoarding](#), trained not to gag at the stench, even as their shoes squished on newspapers slippery with rat urine.

Mr. Johnson, who with Ms. Lewis accompanied a reporter into the woman's home on the condition that she not be identified, shined a flashlight over tangled electrical cords and ancient magazines. If a fire broke out, he told the woman, "my guys would have a tough time getting inside."

"So we'd have to get you out through the window," he told her. "But it would be hard for you to climb through this stuff to get there."

The fire inspector added softly, "Can you let us help you clean this up, to save yourself and not put everyone else at risk?"

An estimated 3 percent to 5 percent of Americans suffer from hoarding, which was officially recognized as a disorder this month in a psychiatric diagnostic manual. But the impact of hoarding extends beyond the afflicted individual and relatives in the home: the behavior can also put immediate neighbors at risk, by creating perfect conditions for explosive house fires and infestations of vermin and disease.

Across the country, local officials like Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lewis have begun grappling with hoarding as a serious public health hazard. More than 85 communities — from San Jose, Calif., to Wichita, Kan., to Portland, Me. — have established task forces, hoping to stave off catastrophes and help hoarders turn their lives around.

The task forces on hoarding are finding their mandates daunting. With each case, officials must weigh when their authority to intervene trumps an individual's right to privacy.

"The nature of the disorder demands multiple resources," said Christiana Bratiotis, an assistant professor of social work at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. "No one discipline has all the expertise needed."

The task forces typically include people from support as well as enforcement perspectives, added Dr. Bratiotis, a co-author of “The Hoarding Handbook,” an intervention guide. “There is value in the carrot-and-stick approach.”

Hoarding disorder is poorly understood, complex and often recurring: over decades, cases wax, wane and become chronic. It is distinct from cluttering or insatiable collecting. The self-soothing need to acquire, coupled with a paralyzing inability to discard, significantly impairs one’s ability to function.

Over the years, a hoarder’s health and hygiene become dangerously compromised. Because stoves, sinks and tubs are used for storage, cooking and bathing become impossible. Sleep becomes a relative term. When the queen-size bed of a rocket engineer Mr. Johnson tried to help became buried under mounds, the man simply hoisted a twin mattress on top. In 2010, a Chicago couple was found buried alive under years of possessions.

The possibility of a hot, hungry fire increases over time. First, utility bills become buried under snowdrifts of paper, so people forget to pay them. Electricity is turned off. Then residents use candles for light and gas burners for heat, inches from swaying towers of cherished trash.

In October 2011, a couple died in a fire in Dana Point, Calif. — a home that officials had tried for years to get cleaned up. Last October, a fire in Old Greenwich, Conn., destroyed a home that officials called inaccessible, leaving a woman critically burned.

In November, a Chicago man was burned, five of his dogs died and a neighbor’s home was scorched. Pat Brennan, a chief with the Chicago Fire Department, told reporters at the scene: “He was a hoarder. It impeded our progress.”

And the problem is not confined to the United States: a 2009 study found that the homes of hoarders accounted for 24 percent of preventable residential fires in Melbourne, Australia.

Task forces are also confronting another public health threat: infestations. After water is shut off, residents may urinate in bottles and defecate in the yard. Bacteria invade. Maggots feast. Vermin burrow.

In September, a woman who was trying to clean up a hoarder’s house featured on a reality TV show tested positive for the rodent-borne hantavirus and was hospitalized, although follow-up tests for hantavirus were negative; the house was briefly placed under quarantine. And particularly when a home shares walls with neighbors in an apartment building or a condo complex, contagion spreads.

Traditional methods for confronting hoarders are increasingly considered draconian and ineffective, creating new problems. Municipal cleanup crews or family members would throw the hoarded contents into a Dumpster, as the homeowner watched, traumatized. Officials would seek civil or criminal penalties.

In extreme cases, a hoarder’s home — floorboards weakened, waste pipes neglected, mold growing deep inside walls — would be condemned. Evicted homeowners and tenants, mentally ill and often estranged

from relatives, became homeless.

A pilot **study** last year led by Carolyn Rodriguez, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Columbia University, found that of 115 clients who sought help from a New York City nonprofit organization to avoid eviction, 22 percent had clinically diagnosed hoarding disorder. In Boston, representatives from MassHousing, a nonprofit group, try to prevent evictions by showing housing court judges that tenants who hoard have a disorder and are receiving help.

Each task force is a loose amalgam of agencies and, depending on what resources they can muster, their goals may range from educating one another and the public to collaborating on cases. But some uniform procedures, and problems, are emerging.

Many task forces around the country use a standard checklist to rank homes. Those rated at levels 1 through 3 may need intervention but may not have descended into squalor.

“I’ve never seen a level 5” — the highest — “be cleaned up for less than \$20,000,” said Mr. Johnson, the inspector, who travels among 23 cities in Orange County and says he sees between 60 and 80 severe cases a year. In some cases, public funds may be available to help cover the cost.

After evaluating a home for fire hazards, he may call in pest control, social workers who specialize in older adults — whose hoarding may have gone undetected for decades — and cleanup crews affiliated with the county’s task force. He will enter notes in a database for first responders, so that if there is a fire or other first-aid emergency at the home, they will be warned which entrances are blocked and to wear additional protective gear.

But even for a comprehensive task force, hoarding cases present harrowing, poignant obstacles, chief among them the homeowners’ fervent resistance to intervention.

Over the years, they increasingly withdraw, terrified of losing their possessions. Mr. Johnson has fended off vicious dogs and faced down armed hoarders. He spent two years trying to clean up one household. He leaves his card, returns every few weeks, brings sandwiches and intercepts residents outside the home.

Another challenge is the stigma of hoarding, dissuading many from seeking help. Some task forces have considered renaming themselves. The Wichita and Sedgwick County Hoarding Coalition offers a “What a Mess Workshop” and a “Clutter Cleaners Club.”

One impediment is whether officials have the right to gain access to a hoarder’s space, particularly to private dwellings. Although landlords and condominium property managers have the right to enter residences, those who do not share walls enjoy greater rights to privacy.

While each municipality has sanitation and building codes, enforcement is discretionary and selective. Even when neighbors complain of unsightly yards or noxious fumes, once those issues are addressed, compelling a homeowner to tackle the interior is problematic.

In egregious cases, said Capt. William Cummins, a fire official in Shrewsbury, Mass., task force members have gone to civil court for an administrative warrant.

But even after a home is rendered habitable, relapse is likely, especially if the underlying causes are not resolved.

Years ago, the woman in the Yorba Linda townhouse had gotten the courage to fill a Dumpster with hoarded materials, although there was plenty left.

“A therapist told me I should at least throw out my papers, but I couldn’t,” she told Ms. Lewis, the code enforcement officer, during the site visit. “There were checks in there somewhere,” she said.

Ms. Lewis learned of the woman’s situation from the complex’s property manager, after a crew came to fix an interior leak that was making one of her walls collapse. To get more information and gain her trust as they inched their way through her home, Ms. Lewis and Mr. Johnson gently chatted her up.

Did she need food? Medication? Since Ms. Lewis had already extended the stick of code enforcement, they now both offered carrots for the cleanup.

Mr. Johnson had a friend at a vermin-control agency who could help. Ms. Lewis had a list of cleaning crews, mentioning that the woman might be eligible for a grant to defray costs.

Mr. Johnson wondered if he might stop by to install smoke detectors. The woman looked relieved. She promised to attend a therapist-led group in nearby Buena Park.

“I didn’t come into this world a hoarder,” she said. “I’m 76 now. I’m not leaving as one.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: May 30, 2013

An article on Monday about efforts to address hoarding as a public health hazard described incompletely an illness contracted by a woman who was cleaning a house featured on a reality TV show about hoarders. Although the woman tested positive for rodent-borne hantavirus and was hospitalized, follow-up tests for hantavirus were negative.

HOARDING

Hampden County Hoarding Taskforce

Linda Saltus
Kristen Andrews-Semler, MSW LCSW
Melissa Conlin
Lori Dixon
Fidan Gousseynoff
Terry Lozyniak, LMHC





5 11:57 AM

tchen

Hoarding Defined

(1) The accumulation and failure to discard a large number of possessions that appear to most people to be useless or of limited value, (2) extensive clutter in living spaces that precludes activities for which the rooms were designed, and (3) significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding.

(Frost & Hartl, 1996 as cited in Steketee & Frost, 2007)

Specifiers

- “With poor insight - if for most of the time during the current episode ,the person does not recognize the clutter, acquisition or difficulty parting with items are excessive or unreasonable.
- With unsanitary conditions - If conditions of the home reflects squalor (presence of human or animal waste, rotting food, insect infestation, etc.) or if personal hygiene is poor (e.g. significant body odor, unkempt appearance, dirty clothing, etc.).”

(Steketee & Frost, 2007 – Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring)

Home of Langley and
Homer Collyer –
Harlem, 1947





What do people hoard?

ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING – people often have themes in terms of what they collect



What do people hoard?

Sylogomania – hoarding garbage



ACQUISITION

- Shopping
- Free stuff
- Stealing
- Passive



AQUISITION

“Acquiring is often associated with positive feelings and even euphoria, which reinforce the behavior and make it difficult to curtail. Compulsive acquiring is also sometimes associated with dissociated states and may be used to soothe negative moods”

Kyrios, Frost, & Steketee, 2004, as cited in Steketee & Frost 2007

Diagnosis (OCPD)

The DSM-IV currently defines hoarding within the diagnosis of OCPD as the inability “to discard worn-out or worthless objects even when they have no sentimental value” (DSM-IV-TR; p. 729)

Diagnosis (OCD)

Hoarding is also mentioned in the DSM-IV as a symptom of OCD: "diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder should be considered especially when hoarding is extreme (e.g., accumulated stacks of worthless objects present a fire hazard and make it difficult for others to walk through the house)" (DSM-IV-TR; p. 728)

Diagnosis continued

Hoarding is included in discussion of other disorders such as Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), schizophrenia, Prader-Willi Syndrome, tic disorders, mental retardation, neurodegenerative disorders among others.

Hoarding vs. OCD

The act of compulsive acquiring for someone who hoards can be extremely pleasurable to the point of creating euphoria. Acquisition can be used to regulate depressed mood, i.e. "shop therapy"

Compulsive acts committed by someone with OCD do not create a "high" but rather they temporarily alleviate the tension and stress created by the person's obsessive thoughts.



Heineken[®]
Beer

Non-discarding



- Sentimental
- Instrumental
- Intrinsic

Photo: Hoarding: Buried alive on TLC as cited in LA Times April 29, 2010 [electronic version]

SENTIMENTAL

Someone who hoards for sentimental reasons is holding on to items because of the memories they bring up. They may keep clothing throughout their entire lives. They are likely to keep toys that their children have long since out grown. Every object is connected with a person or a memory. Discarding that object can bring about fear that the memory attached will be lost forever.

SENTIMENTAL

Grief can play a significant part for sentimental hoarders who may carry the belief that throwing away a deceased loved one's items is a betrayal. They may believe that by keeping all of these belongings they are keeping a part of their loved one alive. There is an emotional attachment to the possessions.



INSTRUMENTAL

- Fear of wasting
- I can do something with this!
- Everything has a potential purpose
- A sense of personal responsibility for all items that have any potential use in the eyes of the hoarder.



INTRINSIC

Someone who hoards for intrinsic purposes may have a particularly strong ability to see the beauty and detail in objects. Hoarders often describe themselves as artists.





Some demographics

- There are an estimated 10 million people in the US with significant hoarding problems.
- The average age that a hoarder seeks treatment is 50.
- Hoarding generally begins in childhood and symptoms will persist without treatment.
- Hoarders tend to be single and have a high rate of divorce.
- No specific race, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic status.
- More men hoard than women; however, more women seek treatment than men

Demographics continued

- More likely to have chronic and severe medical problems
- More likely to have difficulty paying bills
- Three times more likely to be overweight obese than family members
- Not likely related to a history of deprivation
- Age of onset is in the teens, though treatment is sought closer to age 50.
- Late onset hoarding is tied to significant life events that are trauma or loss based.

(Tolin et al., 2007 as cited in Bratiotis & Edsell-Vetter – Interventions for Hoarding, DCF)

Psychological Features

- Challenges with sorting, organizing, and categorizing
- Extreme perfectionism – fear of making the wrong choice and doubt around one's ability to make the correct choice.
- May not consider their behavior to be unreasonable and/or may not notice the clutter.
- Hoarding tends to run in families
- Trauma or loss can precipitate hoarding
- May have unwanted intrusive thoughts
- Anthropomorphizing
- Perception that visual cues are need or memories will be lost.
- Essentialism
- Symptoms are ego syntonic

Problematic Thinking Styles

All-or-nothing – black-or-white thinking that does not allow for shades of gray (moderation). It is exemplified by extreme words like “most”, “everything”, and “nothing” and often accompanies perfectionistic standards.

- “If I can’t figure out the perfect place to put this, I should just leave it here.”
- “This is the most beautiful teapot I have ever seen and I must have it.”
- “I can’t get rid of this until I read and remember everything in this newspaper.”

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Overgeneralization – Generalizing from a single event to all situation by using words such as “always” or “never”

- “I will never find this if I move it.”
- “I’ll need something just as soon as I don’t have it anymore.”

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...



Jumping to Conclusions –

Negative interpretations without facts to support them.

- "If I file this magazine article, I will never be able to find it."
- "I must keep this newspaper because it has some useful information I am certain to need eventually."

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Catastrophizing – Exaggerating the importance of an item and minimize capabilities for obtaining information.

- “If I don’t buy it now, I’ll regret it forever”
- “I’ll never forgive myself”

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Discounting the Positive – Positive experiences don't count.

- "Creating a filing system doesn't count as progress because there is so much more to do."
- "I got this cleared, but it hardly matters because the other rooms are still cluttered."

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Emotional Reasoning – Emotions are allowed to determine logical reasoning; facts are confused with feelings.

- "it seems like there must be something important in this paper. I better keep it."
- "It feels uncomfortable to put this out of sight so I'll just leave it here."
- "I don't want to disappoint the salesman, so I'm sure I'll find I need this."

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Moral Reasoning – “Should” statements, including “musts”, “oughts”, and “have to’s” accompanied by guilt and frustrations. Perfectionism.

- “I really should be able to find any information I need at any time”

- “My home should be very neat and tidy, just like other people’s homes.”

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...



Labeling – Attaching negative label to oneself or others; also an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking.

- "I can't find my electric bill. I'm an idiot."
- "I'm a failure."
- "I can't remember what I read last week, I'm so stupid."

Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Underestimating Oneself

- Underestimating personal ability to cope with adversity and stress.
- “I’ll never be able to organize all this.”
- “If I get rid of this I won’t be able to handle it.”



Problematic Thinking Styles cont...

Overestimating Oneself – Assuming greater capability to accomplish a task than is reasonable.

- "I'll be able to organize my house during my vacation."
- I'll be able to read all those newspapers eventually."

(All problematic Thinking Styles were taken directly from Steketee and Frost, 2007, Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring Workbook)

ANIMAL HOARDING

All different kinds of animals are hoarded. Cats and dogs are the most common. Men tend to hoard dogs and women tend to hoard cats. Women hoard animals more often than men.



(Patronek, 1999 as cited in Frost, 2000 [electronic version])

Animal Hoarding

Nearly 250,000 animals are victims of hoarding neglect in this country every year.



(www.humansociety.org)

Animal Hoarding

In a 1999 study by Patronek, "Dead or sick animals were discovered in 80% of reported cases [of animal hoarding], yet in nearly 60% of cases the hoarder would not acknowledge the problem. In 69% of cases, animal feces and urine accumulated in living areas, and over one-quarter of the hoarders' beds were soiled with feces or urine. Hoarders' justifications for their behavior included an intense love of animals, the feeling that animals were surrogate children, the belief that no one else would or could take care of them, and the fear that the animals would be euthanized"

(Patronek, 1999 as cited in Frost, 2000 [electronic version])

Animal Hoarding - defined

- "Having more than the typical number of companion animals
- Failing to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter, and veterinary care, with this neglect often resulting in illness and death from starvation, spread of infectious disease, and untreated injury or medical condition
- Denial of the inability to provide this minimum care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household, and human occupants of the dwelling
- Persistence, despite this failure, in accumulating and controlling animals"

Animal Hoarder Profile

- The Overwhelmed Caregiver
- The Rescuer
- Exploiter



(photo: <http://animal.discovery.com/tv/confessions-animal-hoarding>)

Animal Hoarding

Overwhelmed Caregiver – have good intentions and initially provide adequate care. The situation then becomes out of control. The overwhelmed caregiver can maintain some level of insight and thus is more accepting of help than other animal hoarders.

Animal Hoarding

Rescuer – “These hoarders develop a compulsion based on a strong need to rescue animals from possible death or euthanasia; actively acquired animals and believes they are the only ones who can adequately care for them, find it hard to refuse any new animals, may work within a network of animal welfare people; avoids authorities.”
(www.animalhoarding.com)

This group may be delusional in their thinking and believe that they have a particular gift or ability to care for and/or communicate with the animals. They believe they are doing the right thing.

Animal Hoarding

Exploiter – “These hoarders acquire animals to serve their own needs and are indifferent to the harm caused to them; deny the problem and reject authority figures or outside help; believe they know best and have an extreme need to control; may come across as charming, articulate, manipulative and cunning; skilled at presenting excuses and explanations for their circumstances; self-concerned and expressing no remorse or guilt; acquires animals actively; plans to evade the law, will lie cheat and steal without remorse in order to achieve their goals.” (www.animalhoarding.com)

Animal Hoarding

Without treatment, there is a nearly 100% recidivism rate for animal hoarding.



Animal Hoarding - implications

- Destruction of the Home
- Social challenges
- Poor air quality
- Protective services
- Diseases – zoonotic, through inhalation, contact with animals or waste, or insects.



MYTHS ABOUT HOARDING

TRUE OR FALSE

Individuals who hoard have low standards of cleanliness.

FALSE: Hoarding is not a result of low standards of cleanliness, housekeeping, or a lack of responsibility. In fact, the opposite can be true.

TRUE OR FALSE

- Individuals who hoard are lazy.
- FALSE: Hoarding is a mental health disorder not a personality trait. People who hoard value items beyond the items' actual worth.

TRUE OR FALSE

- A hoarding problem can be solved by doing a major clean out.
- FALSE: At times the clean out is needed to preserve the individual's housing or for safety reasons; however, the "major clean out" is traumatic and only addresses the symptom. The individual has a strong need to acquire and save items and the items are very important to the individual; so important that the hoarder might risk losing their home or relationships.

TRUE OR FALSE

- Hoarding mainly affects seniors that lived through the Great Depression.
- FALSE: Hoarding habits cross all ages and is not deprivation based. Those who lived through the Great Depression are not more likely to hoard than those who did not.

TRUE OR FALSE

- Hoarding mainly effects the poor.
- FALSE: Hoarding spans all economic, educational, and professional levels.

TRUE OR FALSE

- Individuals who hoard feel shame or embarrassment.
- TRUE: Individuals who hoard often put off repairs and will avoid asking for help so as not to let people into their home.

TRUE OR FALSE

- People who hoard are selfish.
- FALSE: Some individuals hoard in order to save for others. They feel the items are useful and someone else may be able to put them to use.

HOW TO TALK TO A HOARDER

COMMUNICATION

- It is important to see to understand the individual hoarder's perspective. Understanding will help you to avoid judgmental statements and expressions. It is important to remember the person is likely already embarrassed.

COMMUNICATION continued...

- Communicate in a respectful, non-confrontational manner. Use “I” statements to express your concern instead of telling the person what to do. Match the person’s language and avoid labels such as “junk” or “hoarder” unless these are terms that the individual uses.

COMMUNICATION continued...

- Avoid telling the person what they should or should not keep. Avoid touching the person's items. Involve the person in the process of discarding and only touch or move items with permissions.

COMMUNICATION continued...

- Be encouraging. Notice the person's strengths. Give the person control when and where possible. Keep the person's focus small, work in short time increments. Help the person sort or organize the items into piles. Suggest donating rather than discarding whenever possible.

COMMUNICATION continued...

- Encourage the person not to acquire things and help them learn how to deal with the resulting anxiety.

- Encourage the person to accept support as they are ready and help them to access available resources. Group therapy and self help groups can provide help with coping strategies and lessen isolation. Advocate for the person and whenever possible work as a team with other professionals to help avoid burnout.

References for “How to Talk to a Hoarder”

- Are You a Hoarder? By Stephanie Schorow, Special to Lifescript Published June 13, 2010
- How to Talk to a Person who Hoards: Cristina Schmalish, PhD, LICSW Central Ma Regional Hoarding Risk Assessment Training handout.
- The psychology Behind too Much Stuff: By Maria Cook, The Ottawa Citizen September 28, 2010

HEALTH AND SAFETY

How do we identify Health and Safety issues for hoarders?



- The degree to which health and safety threats are brought to the attention of others depends, in part, on the individual's living situation and the right of public officials to enter their residence.



PRIVATE HOMES

- Normally local officials have no right to enter a private home without the consent of the resident.
- Hoarders in private homes are discovered if
 - They have an emergency and call 911 for assistance
 - The local board of health or housing inspector becomes aware of an issue in the home and must inspect
 - There is a disabled person, child or endangered animal in the home and there is a concern about their well being, so risk must be assessed by professionals



RENTAL PROPERTIES

- In a rental property all of the prior reasons for professionals to enter the home also apply
- The landlord has the right to enter the unit at least once a year for inspection
- The maintenance staff are allowed to enter to remedy any building related issues

Main issues discovered

- Fire Hazards
- Health Hazards
- Safety Hazards

Fire Hazards

- Failure to provide clear pathways for the resident to exit the home in case of fire
- Clutter in home preventing professionals from entering the home to extinguish a fire
- Combustible materials in the home either near heat sources or on top of the stove
- Large quantities of combustible materials in the home (ex: newspapers)
- Absence of working smoke detectors
- Defective electric or heating systems



Health Hazards



- Accumulation of garbage including spoiled food items
- Rodents, insects or other pests that can contribute to the spread of disease
- Absence of useable sink
- Unusable toilet and/or sewage disposal system
- Lack of accessible wash basin, shower or tub
- Accumulation of animal waste

Safety Hazards

- Fall risk from excessive debris on floor blocking pathways
- Stairways cluttered and impassable
- Needed home care services unable to be provided because of excess clutter in the home
- Weight of accumulated debris compromising the structure of the home (ex: ceiling or floor collapsing)
- No safe place to sleep, eat or sit



Elderly Hoarding

- Inability to manage clutter or physically discard items due to age related frailty
- Excessive clutter or collection of items has a greater impact on the Elderly. They may already have mobility or health issues that make them more susceptible to potential risks associated with hoarding

CHILD PROTECTIVE IMPLICATIONS



Risk factors for kids

- Vermin (bites to children from rodents and asthma from cockroaches)
- Fire risks: only .25% of fires involve hoarding; however 24% of fire related deaths involved hoarding (http://web.cs.wpi.edu/~rek/Projects/MFB_D09.pdf)
- Crush risk
- Unsafe ground
- Mobility issues for young walkers

Risk Factors for Kids continued

- Lack of access to emergency response workers
- narrow passageways
- Blocked exits
- Lack of personal hygiene – hoarded bathrooms and/or broken toilet/shower/sink
- Illness from inability to store or prepare food hygienically – broken appliances
- Inadequate sleeping arrangements - smothering

Social-Emotional Challenges for Kids in Hoarded Homes

- Fewer social opportunities – can't have friends over. Feelings of isolation & rejection
- Lack of personal space within the home
- Shame and embarrassment
- Learned or inherited hoarding habits
- Strain in parent-child relationship; resentment toward parents
- Most dramatic for kids who lived in a hoarded home before the age of 10.
- Exposure to conflicts between parents, if only one parent hoards – high stress household
- Learned helplessness due to the child's inability to affect change over the situation

Historical DCF response

- You've got three days...!
- The teenager in the home can help clean up
- What? They didn't clean the house in three days - REMOVE!

...these responses don't work!

Things to consider...

- What is the minimum that needs to happen for this child to remain in the home safely?
- What is the age/ability of the child and thus what are the risk factors specific to this child?
- Is it possible for the parent to arrange for the child to stay somewhere else while minimum safety standards are obtained?
- What support and services will this family need for this family to remain intact or for the child to be able to return home?
- What other agencies or departments could help this family or help assess risk?

Housing, Eviction, Legal Rights & Reasonable Accommodations



In many cases hoarding goes far beyond personal problem. Severe clutter may threaten the safety and health of affected individuals, their family members, neighbors and the general public and may need involvement of legal system

Circumstances that may need involvement of legal system

- Fire hazard;
- Risk of condemnation;
- Neglect or abuse of children, elders and persons with disabilities when excessive accumulation of possessions cause risk to their health, hinder routine activities, normal care and development;
- Sanitary problems, pest control;
- Animal hoarding causes maltreating, starving and improper care of animals

LEGAL GROUND

Note: local codes do not regulate hoarding directly.

- Fire Safety Code (527 CMR) – see Appendix 1
- CMR: Department of Public Health (105 CMR Dept of Public Health, chapter 410.750 & 410.602) –see Appendix 2
 - Mass State Building Code
 - City Ordinances – see Appendix 3
- Lease Agreements – see Appendix 4 and Appendix 5

ISSUES THAT REQUIRE INVOLVEMENT OF AUTHORITIES

- Fire hazard caused by excessive clutter of hazardous materials or keeping combustible materials near heat sources;
- Lack of path for egress in case of an emergency;
- Excessive clutter may not allow emergency services personnel to enter or move inside the house/ unit;
- Insects and rodents infestation caused by accumulation of trash / garbage / filth and dust

Local Authorities Who May be Involved if Hoarding Presents Risk to Health & Safety

- Fire Dept and / or EMT
- Board of Health
- Child Protective Services
- Elder Protective Services
- Disabled Persons Protection Commission
- Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or Animal Rescue League

Who May Initiate Legal Actions or Inform Appropriate Authorities about Risk Caused by Hoarding

- Landlords, property managers, RSCs
- Neighbors, family members, PCAs, visiting nurses
- Social workers
- Home inspectors
- Animal protection agency staff
- Authorities (Fire Dept, Public Health agency)

Legal Sanctions

- If children, seniors or persons with disabilities are at risk of neglect or abuse because of hoarding, protective services may petition and receive guardianship and removal of neglected person from the house;
- Representatives of the Board of Health or Fire Dept may request a court order to bring a property in compliance with safety regulations, in severe cases – to condemn it;
- Abused or neglected animals may be removed from the owners by animal protection services;

Legal Sanctions (cont'd)

- Mandating cleaning or removal of excessive clutter;
- Ordering psychological evaluation;
- Eviction (hoarding is 3rd leading cause of eviction after non-payment of rent and substance abuse);
- In some cases – misdemeanor conviction, fines or jail time

Legal actions against animal hoarders will be reviewed below

Eviction Scenario (in rental housing)

1. Manager of the rental property addresses the issue with the tenant and holds an Informal Conference;
2. If the apartment did not improve, the Manager can then have the attorneys prepare a 30 Day Notice to Quit;
3. If the tenant does not vacate after the 30 days are up the property manager can then file a Summary Process Complaint which would be served by a sheriff and the case would be entered into court;

Eviction Scenario (in rental housing)

4. A Court Order may be issued whereby the tenant would have to remove and /or clean the apartment of the items. In some cases A Court Agreement may be reached whereby the tenant agrees to remove the items;
5. If a tenant fails to follow a court Order or Court Agreement, he/she can be evicted;
6. In severe cases the attorneys can file a Complaint in court, which will get them a court date much faster sometimes within two or three days

LEGAL SANCTIONS AGAINST HOARDERS LIVING IN PRIVATE PROPERTY

- More difficult to detect hoarding issues because:
 - Hoarders usually do not socialize;
 - Conditions posing threat to health and safety are not apparent from the outside of the house;
 - A shortage of code enforcement personnel may preclude, or severely limit, investigation, especially if a property owner does not give a permission to enter property and obtaining an administrative search warrant is needed.

LEGAL SANCTIONS AGAINST HOARDERS LIVING IN PRIVATE PROPERTY

(cont'd)

- If the inspecting official finds that the conditions constitute hazard for health and safety, a notice of the violation is issued. Notice is sent to the property owner of record, and is posted at the site;
- The property owner is given a period of time to remedy the violation. The amount of time is variable, 30 days is typical, and may include provision for extensions;
- Once the time period for compliance has passed the property is re-inspected. If there has been no voluntary compliance, the city can perform the needed clean up, and bill the costs to the property owner

DO LEGAL ACTIONS RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF HOARDING?

- Legal intervention is necessary in many cases and in some cases may be effective, however most of the time it does not resolve the core problem of hoarding;
- Chances of recidivism and mental problems deterioration are very high. A forced clean-up and other interference are potentially very devastating for hoarders.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE LEGAL SANCTIONS MORE EFFICIENT

- A special long-term plan (gradual approach, step-by-step action plan, timeframes in accordance with a hoarder's needs);
- Referrals to support groups, mental health and social services providers;
- Community support, educating about hoarding issues and increasing awareness about the problem among all parties involved;

Reasonable Accommodation

Persons with hoarding problems who meet disability criteria may request reasonable accommodation from their housing providers if

- They were mandated to remove the clutter from their apartment and due to their disability they need more time and assistance with cleaning and removing the clutter;
- They may also need special payment plan in case their rent is in arrears due to hoarding and they have to pay to clean/remove their stuff

Reasonable Accommodation- Regulations

- Persons with disabilities and seniors may request reasonable accommodation under federal regulations:
 - Rehabilitation Act §504 29 USC §794
 - Fair Housing Amendment Act § 42 USC §3601
 - Americans with Disabilities Act



Reasonable Accommodation (cont'd)

- Housing provider has legal right to request verification about person's disability or that accommodation is necessary;
- Verification may be provided by the person's doctor or social worker, but they are not required to disclose the person's medical history;
- Documentation is not necessary if a person's disability is known or apparent.
- Tenant's request for extra time should be realistic

Reasonable Accommodation (cont'd)

- If the clutter poses life-threatening hazard, the tenant has to deal with it immediately (e.g. remove flammable items from the source of heat);
- If the housing provider considers that requested accommodation is not reasonable, he/she must work with the tenant to find what other accommodation can be offered to help the tenant

Developing a Plan

- Regular meetings with the tenant, follow-up visits;
- Referrals to support groups, individual counseling;
- Referrals to home care agencies for short (to clean the clutter) and long term care;
- Providing the person a list of donation centers and cleaning companies;
- In-home education and skill building regarding shopping, organization, and sanitation skills;

Implementing a Plan – a Win-Win Situation

For a tenant –

- to keep his/her apartment;
- improve quality of life;
- receive long-term support services

For a Housing Provider-

- to make their property healthier, safe and in compliance with Fair Housing regulations;
- to save time and thousands of dollars on legal fees, cleanout, eviction etc.

ANIMAL HOARDING – LEGAL ASPECT



ANIMAL HOARDING in LAWS

- In every state and/or city, animal hoarders can be prosecuted under animal cruelty laws – *see Appendix 6*. Because failure to provide proper care for animals is an act of omission or neglect rather than an affirmative act, animal hoarding is considered a misdemeanor offense in most states;

Penalties and sanctions for animal cruelty offenses can include:

- fines;
- animal forfeiture;
- jail time;
- Court order to provide psychological counseling for convicted animal abusers (e.g. in California);
- bans on future pet ownership or limits on the number of animals a convicted hoarder may keep in the future;
- "Bond laws" require animal owners to post a security or bond for the care of the seized animals. Generally, these bond laws require that the owners of impounded animals post securities to cover the care of their impounded animals in thirty day increments. If the payment is not received, the animals may be adopted out or euthanized.

ANIMAL HOARDING AND LAWS

- CHALLENGES and PROBLEMS

- Only a limited number of states specifically outlaw animal hoarding (e.g. Hawaii) or include a definition of animal hoarding (e.g. Indiana) into laws. Critics of animal hoarding legislation consider animal hoarding laws as redundant and unnecessary;
- It is unclear whether there is any bright-line numerical rule distinguishing animal hoarders from other animal owners who abuse or neglect their animals. When no fixed number of animals is defined in an anti-hoarding statute, it is extremely difficult to distinguish hoarding from animal cruelty ;

PROSECUTING ANIMAL HOARDING - CHALLENGES and PROBLEMS

- Extremely high expenses for the state and private shelters to care of the animals seized from their abusive owners (cost of food, shelter expenses, vet care and often expenses on euthanization).
- The animals are considered evidence in the prosecution, which means they cannot be adopted out or sent to foster homes until the prosecution is complete.
- Prosecutors lack the tools to monitor cases.
- Inconsistent charges – some prosecutors and judges discourage multiple charges (one count of animal cruelty for the entire group of animals rather than one count of cruelty for each animal involved) to reduce burdens on the system, the prosecutors, and the animal agencies, however such a practice undermines the severity of the charges.

PROSECUTING ANIMAL HOARDING - CHALLENGES and PROBLEMS (cont'd)

- The recidivism rate for animal hoarders is nearly 100%, so a one-time rescue or a prosecution and a fine are rarely, if ever, permanent solutions.
- Cooperation with various agencies (code enforcement, public health, animal control) and communication between them is a key factor in prosecuting hoarders, however practice shows that this communication is very weak;
- Without community support, many prosecutors do not want to take the time or effort to fully prosecute hoarding cases. Public opinion often ridicules prosecutors for working on hoarding cases

Appendix 1

Fire Safety Code (527 CMR)

“ Any obstacle which may interfere with the means of egress or escape from any buildings or other premises, or with the access to any part of said building or premises by the fire dept in case of fire, shall be removed from aisles, floors, halls, stairways and fire escapes. Doors and windows designated as exists shall be kept clear at all times”

Appendix 2

105 CMR Dept of Public Health, Chapter 410.750 stipulates:

“Failure to provide adequate exits, or the obstruction of any exit, passageway or common area caused by any object, including garbage or trash, which prevents egress in case of an emergency” as a condition seemed to endanger or impair health and safety

Chapter 410.602 stipulates:

The occupant of any dwelling unit shall be responsible for maintaining in a clean and sanitary condition and free of garbage, rubbish, other filth or causes of sickness

Appendix 3

Chapter 7 (Fire Prevention) of the City of Springfield Ordinance stipulates that any member of the bureau of fire prevention may order the removal or the disposing and arranging of articles. materials, rubbish, debris, waste or inflammable or combustible materials from premises, buildings or structures if these articles pose fire hazard or do not allow reasonable access to the exits in case of fire

Appendix 4

Public Housing State Lease requires tenants to:

- Maintain clean and sanitary condition of leased premises;
- Dispose (and to cause each household member and guest to dispose) of all garbage, trash and refuse properly;
- To keep the leased premises in safe condition. There shall be no storage of flammable liquids or hazardous substances in the leased premises or elsewhere on PHA's property, unless such liquids or substances are normal household items and are properly stored. No hazardous waste of any sort shall be stored in the leased premises, and all hazardous waste, shall be properly disposed of by the Tenant;
- To refrain from damaging (and to cause each household member and guest to refrain from damaging) the leased premises or any other property of SHA

This lease and occupancy of the leased premises by Tenant and Tenant's household members may be terminated by PHA in case any of these obligations are violated

Appendix 5



To ensure that the occupants have an acceptable means of egress that is not blocked in case of fire. Blocked means that the exit is not readily useable due to conditions such as debris, storage, air conditioner in the window, door nailed shut, door swelled shut, or a broken lock.

- **DHCD/HUD Guideline 8.4 – GARBAGE AND DEBRIS**

The unit must be free of heavy accumulation of garbage and debris both inside and out.

- **DHCD/HUD Guideline 16.8.3 – GARBAGE AND DEBRIS**

The occupant is responsible to maintain the unit free of garbage, debris, filth or cause of sickness. If the occupant fails to do so, the inspection fails as tenant caused.

- **DHCD/HUD Guideline 8.7 – OTHER INTERIOR HAZARDS**

- **DHCD/HUD Guideline 8.2 – EXITS**

The unit is required to be free of any other hazards not specifically identified previously.

Appendix 6

MA Consolidated Cruelty Statutes

MA ST 272 § 77 - 95; MA ST 272 § 34

These Massachusetts laws contain the state's anti-cruelty provisions.

§ 77 is the operative anti-cruelty statute and provides that whoever overdrives, overloads, drives when overloaded, overworks, tortures, torments, *deprives of necessary sustenance*, cruelly beats, mutilates or kills an animal, and whoever uses in a cruel or inhuman manner in a race, game, or contest, or in training, as lure or bait a live animal (except as bait in fishing), or knowingly and willfully authorizes or permits it to be subjected to unnecessary torture, suffering or cruelty of any kind shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than 5 years or imprisonment for not more than 2 1/2 years or by a fine of not more than \$2,500, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

Springfield City Ordinance about Animal Care

Every owner shall provide his animals with good and wholesome food and water, proper shelter and protection from the weather, veterinary care when needed to prevent suffering, and provide humane care and treatment, not abandon their animals. The animal control officer, a health and human services employee, or any humane officer or police officer may initiate before a district court judge a search warrant for any premises upon a showing of probable cause to believe that a violation of any provision of this chapter is occurring or has occurred within a reasonable time thereon; and take charge of and impound the animals or fowl involved in such violations

Resources

Where do I start?

For a first step, you can look online. The MassHousing website hosts a comprehensive statewide listing of Hoarding Resources and links. Access it by www.masshousing.com/hoarding or click on the Hoarding Resources link at masshousing.com. Topics found there include:

- Training & Research Opportunities
- General Hoarding Information
- Statewide Steering Committee & Local Mass. Hoarding Task Forces
- Tools: Assessments & Forms
- Mass. Codes and Related Legal Information
- Massachusetts Resources
- Publications & Research
- Animal Hoarding
- Treatment & Self-Help Groups

Who should I contact?

Most hoarding cases are complicated and multi-disciplinary services should be involved. A brief outline of possible partners to consider:

- Housing - *Landlords, management, housing authorities, homeless shelters*
- Protective Services - *child, elder, disabled, animal welfare*
- Public Health and Safety, First Responders – *police, fire, board of health, EMTs, public health nurses*
- Medical Personnel - *occupational therapists, visiting nurse, doctors*
- Mental Health - *DMH, psychiatrists, social workers*
- Legal Agencies - *housing or district court, legal services, attorneys*
- Clean up Services - *professional organizers, clean outs, chore services*
- Case Management, Home Care, Housing Support Service Providers - *DMH, DCF, elder protective services, disability advocates, home care workers, in-home service providers*
- Third Party Payers
- Self Help Groups - *Support groups, Clutterer's Anonymous*

But seriously, who should I contact?

Elder Services

- Greater Springfield Senior Services: 1-800-649-3641
- Highland Valley Elder Services: 1-800-322-0551
- WestMass ElderCare: 1-800-462-2301
- Franklin County Home Care: 1-800-732-4636

Regional State Offices

- Department of Child & Family Services: 413- 452-3350
- Department of Mental Health: 413-587-6200
- Department of Public Health: 413-586-7525

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)

- Hampden County - MHA, Inc., 413-233-5353
- Hampshire County - MHA, Inc., 413-584-2003
- Franklin County - MHA, Inc., 413-772-5636
- Berkshire County – Berkshire County Regional Housing, 413-433-7138 ext. 18

Other Agencies

- Western Mass Legal Services: 1-800-639-1309
- Local Board of Health
- Local Veteran's Services

What about treatment?

Treatment for hoarding often requires the therapist to have a specific understanding and knowledge of the disorder. Several local clinics and agencies have staff who are trained in hoarding treatment.

UMass Psychological Services Center, UMass Amherst, 413-545-0041 <http://www.umass.edu/psc>

- Offers treatment coupled with in-home support services

Community Health Consulting, Christopher Overtree, PhD, 413-340-1236,
communityhealthconsulting@gmail.com

- A therapeutic decluttering program that works with a 10 week treatment module

ServiceNet, 129 King St., Northampton, 413-585-1328, <http://www.servicenetinc.org>.

- Offers individual & group treatment

Carson Center 77 Mill Street, Westfield, 413-568-6386, <http://www.carsoncenter.org>

- Offers individual treatment

Anxiety Disorder Clinic, Institute of Living, Hartford Hospital, 860-545-7685

<http://www.harthosp.org/instituteofliving/anxietydisorderscenter>

- Individual Therapy

Local Therapists

There are also some local therapists who specialize or have training in hoarding treatments. They can be found through a searchable database found on the International Obsessive Compulsive Foundation website.

<http://www.ocfoundation.org/hoarding/>

Local Clinics & Agencies

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413-545-0041 <http://www.umass.edu/psc>

- Offers treatment coupled with in-home support services

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<http://www.harthosp.org/instituteofliving/anxietydisorderscenter>

- Individual Therapy

Other Agencies

- Western Mass Legal Services: 1-800-639-1309
- Local Board of Health
- Local Veteran's Services

Local Support Groups

Support Groups

In Hampden County

Mondays at 4:00 pm, Wachogue Congregational Church, 80 Arvilla Street, Springfield

Clutterer's Anonymous – Based on the 12 Step Program Model

<http://sites.google.com/site/clutterersanonymous/>

In Hampden County

Mondays at 6:00 pm

YMCA of Greater Springfield, 275 Chestnut Street, Springfield, for info, call 413-531-5023

Fridays at 6:00 pm

Bethesda Lutheran Church 455 Island Pond Road, Springfield

In Hampshire County

Fridays at 7:30 pm

Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, for info, call 413-549-1198

In Franklin County

Mondays at 7:30 pm

Recover Project office 68 Federal Street, Greenfield For info, call 413-774-5489

Web Support Groups

- Messiness & Hoarding Support Group
 - <http://health.dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Messiness-and-Hoarding/>
- Beth Johnson's Clutter Workshop
 - <http://www.clutterworkshop.com/workshop/index.shtml>
- Decluttering programs to help chronically disorganized clutterers
 - Written **by** clutterers **for** clutterers; <http://clutterless.org/index.html>
- <http://declutter.meetup.com/>
 - Around 6 groups in eastern Mass
- FlyLady.net
 - Many swear by FlyLady for being the one thing that gave them the structure and motivation to get their homes clean and organized and more importantly, keep them that way.

Additional Web Resources

- www.ocfoundation.org/hoarding/ : *Hoarding web site by Dr. Randy Frost & Dr. Gail Steketee*
- http://understanding OCD.tripod.com/index_hoarding.html: *Understanding Hoarding*
- www.anxietyandstress.com/sys-tmpl/hoarding/: *The Anxiety and Stress Disorders Institute of Maryland, LLP*
- <http://www.mahb.org/learningcenter.htm> *1 hour e-course on hoarding*
- www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/111-127a.htm *Massachusetts law governing sanitary codes, Chapter 111. Sec. 127*
- www.childrenofhoarders.com *Growing up in a cluttered home*
- www.la4seniors.com/hoarding.htm *Los Angeles County Dept. of Mental Health*
- www.mhaoc.org/hoarding *Orange County California Hoarding Task Force*
- <http://www.hoardingtaskforce.org> *International Exchange on Hoarding website for professionals & task force members*

Animal Hoarding

- www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/behind_closed_doors_the_horrors_of_animal_hoarding.html *Behind Closed Doors: The Horrors of Animal Hoarding – The Humane Society of the United States*
- www.peta.org/mc/factsheet_display.asp?ID=27 *Animal Hoarders: The Illness and the Crime*
- www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/index.html *Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium*

Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom

Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.



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Thank You!

