Hoarding: A Collaborative Approach

Perspectives and approaches for working with those who hoard

Minnesota Hoarding Task Force
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Background and Public Health Perspective

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What Is Hoarding Disorder?

American Psychiatric Association (APA):

• Excessive **acquisition/saving** of items
• **Difficulty parting** with possessions
• **Inability to use living spaces** for their intended purposes
• Unusual **attachment** to items
• Significant **distress or physical impairment**

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
Prevalence

2-5% of U.S. population

Hoardings can affect ANY:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Income level
- Marital or living arrangement status
- Mental or physical health status

(Chapin et al., 2010)
Why Do People Hoard?

Usually related to unresolved grief, loss or trauma.

Other contributing factors include:

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Dementia
- Genetics

(Steketee & Frost, 2003); (Tolin at al., 2008)
Why Should We Care?

- Danger
- Public nuisance, public health, public safety
- Cost
- We will be asked to help

(Sorrell, 2012); (Hogstel, 1993)
Service Worker Perspective

Listen and support — act against stigma

Encourage counseling and/or support groups

Give time

Be specific
Tools For Success

1. Collaborative approach
2. Develop a procedure
   • Standardize terminology
   • Standardize assessments
   • Strengthen ordinances
   • Track complaints and cases
   • Follow up
3. Stay connected
   • Minnesota Hoarding Task Force

(Lauder et al., 2005)
**Terminology**

Use term “heavy content” to describe homes with a lot of stuff.

- **Unsanitary Home**
  - Pests, animals, feces, rotting food, gross filth, etc.

- **Hoarded Home**
  - Paper, trinkets, collections, clothing, etc.

A client is a **person who hoards**, NOT a hoarde r!


Collaboration: The Professional Organizer

Presented by Louise Kurzeka
Everything’s Together®
Background

• Entered the organizing field in 1992
  • Consulting, Teaching and Training
• Challenging clients begin to surface
• Needed to be more educated
People and their stuff

• People who Collect
People and their stuff

• People who Clutter
People and their stuff

• People who Hoard
The One on One Consultation

• How we Interact with the Client

• Language is key - tone in voice
• Respect for possessions & non-judgemental
• Just the facts Ma’am
• Establish specific and manageable goals
• They always retain the power of choice
Safety first

• Hazardous items/locations

• Blocked Exits

• Pests
Easier to Discard Items

• Reading Material
• Excess Food
• Unused/Replaced Electronics
• Other
Clutter Image Rating Scale: Kitchen

Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.
# ICD: Clutter Hoarding Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Structure and Zoning</th>
<th>Animals and Pets</th>
<th>Household Functions</th>
<th>Health and Safety</th>
<th>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>All doors, stairs and windows accessible; plumbing, electric and HVAC detectors installed and functional</td>
<td>Normal animal control (behavior/sanitation); approved number of animals; no evidence of rodents or insects</td>
<td>No excessive clutter; all rooms properly used; appliances functional; consistent housekeeping and maintenance</td>
<td>Safe, sanitary; no odors; medication control OK</td>
<td>OPTIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>1 major axis blockout; 1 major appliance or HVAC device not working for longer than one season; some plumbing or electrical systems not fully functional; fire or CO2 detectors non-existent or non-functional</td>
<td>Evidence of inappropriate animal control; visible or odorous pet waste; visible pet fur/hair/feathers; light to moderate evidence of common household pests/insects</td>
<td>Clutter beginning to obstruct living areas; slight congestion of exits, entrances, hallways and stairs; some household appliances not functional; inconsistent housekeeping and maintenance</td>
<td>Diminished appropriate sanitation; odors from dirty clothes; food prep area; laundry; toilet, medicine; personal hygiene; medication control questionable</td>
<td>LIGHT PPE (Medical or work gloves; cap (baseball or poly bollard); first aid kit; insect repellent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Outside clutter of items normally stored indoors; HVAC devices not working for longer than one season; fire or CO2 detectors non-existent or non-functional; one part of home has light structural damage (occurring within past six months)</td>
<td>Animal population exceeds local regulations; inappropriate animal control; inadequate sanitation; audible evidence of pests; medium level of spiders; light to moderate infestation of bed bugs, lice, fleas, roaches, ants, silverfish, spiders, etc.</td>
<td>Clutter obstructing functions of key living areas; building up around exits, entrances, hallways and stairs; at least one room not being used for intended purposes; several appliances not functional; inappropriate usage of electric appliances and extension cords; substantial housekeeping and maintenance; hazardous substances in small quantities</td>
<td>Limited evidence of maintaining sanitation (heavily soiled food prep areas, dirty clothes, mildew); odors obvious and irritating; garbage cans not in use or overflowing; dirt, dust and debris; dirty laundry throughout house; Rx and OTC medications hazardless control (all children, pets, partially intact)</td>
<td>MEDIUM PPE (Face masks or N95 respirators; goggles; protective eyewear; disposable coveralls; poly caps; work shoes/boots; first aid kit; hand sanitizer; insect repellent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Excessive outdoor clutter of items normally stored indoors; HVAC devices not working for longer than one year; CO2 detectors non-existent or non-functional; structural damage to home lasting longer than six months; water damaged floors, damaged walls and foundations, broken windows, doors or plumbing; odor or evidence of sewer backup</td>
<td>Animal population exceeds local ordinances; poor animal sanitation; destructive behavior; excessive spiders and webs; bats, rodents in attic or basement (eatable and vertebrate); medium to heavy insect infestation</td>
<td>Diminished use and accessibility to key living areas; several rooms cluttered to extent they cannot be used for intended purposes; clutter/inhibits access to doorways, hallways and stairs; inappropriate storage of hazardous/combustible materials; appliances used inappropriately; incomplete use of electric appliances, space heaters, fans or extension cords</td>
<td>Rotting food, organic contamination, expired, leaking or broken bottles, buckled sides and top; dishwashing and utensils unusable; mold on floors; sleeping on mattresses; chair/ or floor; infestation of bedding and/or furniture; medications and OTC medications hazardless control (all children, pets, partially intact)</td>
<td>FULL PPE (Face masks or N95 respirators; goggles; protective eyewear; disposable coveralls; poly caps; work shoes/boots; first aid kit; hand sanitizer; insect repellent; headlamp or flashlight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Extreme indoor/outdoor clutter; foliage overgrown; abandoned machinery; ventilation inadequate or nonexistent; HVAC systems not working; water damaged floors, walls and foundations; broken windows, doors or plumbing; Walter electrical condensing; wiring or septic systems; odor or sewer backup; irreplaceable damage to exterior and interior structure</td>
<td>Animals at risk and danger to people due to behavior, health and numbers; pervasive spiders, cockroaches, mice, rats, squirrels, raccoons, bats, snakes, etc.; heavy to moderate infestation of insects such as bed bugs, lice, fleas, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, etc.</td>
<td>Key living spaces not usable; all rooms not used for intended purpose; hallways and stairs blocked; toilets, sinks and tubs not functioning; hazardous conditions observed by clutter; appliances unusable; hazardous and combustible use of kerosene, limonene, candles, fireplaces/accidents as primary source of heat and/or light</td>
<td>Human urine and excrement present; rotting food; organic contamination; expired, leaking or broken bottles; dishwashing and utensils unusable; mold on floors; sleeping on mattresses; chair/ or floor; infestation of bedding and/or furniture; medications and OTC medications hazardless control (all children, pets, partially intact)</td>
<td>FULL PPE REQUIRED (N95 respirator mask; mask with organic filters; safety goggles; medical or industrial grade latex; safety gloves; disposable coveralls; poly caps; work shoes/boots; first aid kit; hand sanitizer; insect repellent; headlamp or flashlight)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Set a Staging Area
Categorize, contain, label
Assess items one by one
One on One Consultations

- Close of each session
  - Review the progress
  - Move items as close as possible to area of use
  - Eliminate trash/recycle
  - Have a plan for removing hazardous items
  - Confirm next appointment and area of focus
One on One Consultations

• Challenges will appear
  • Staying in same location over time
  • Co-morbid conditions add a twist
  • Client impatient with progress
  • Family impatient with progress
  • May stop as soon as “crisis” is averted
  • May need to change who they work with
Helpful Resources

• Education:

https://hoarding.iocdf.org/

www.aarp.org (search hoarding for multiple articles)

www.childrenofhoarders.com
Helpful Resources

- **Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding**
  by David Tolin, Randy O. Frost and Gail Stekedee

- **Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things**
  by Randy O. Frost and Gail Stekedee

- **Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring: Therapist’s Guide**
  by Gail Stekedee and Randy O. Frost

- **Dirty Secret: A Daughter Comes Clean about Her Mother’s Compulsive Hoarding**
  by Jessie Sholl
Helpful Resources

• Don’t Toss My Memories in the Trash by Vickie Dellaquila

• Overcoming Compulsive Hoarding: Why You Save & How You Can Stop
  by Fugen Neziroglu, Jerome Bubrick and Jose Yaryura-Tobias

• The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals
  by Christiana Bratiotis, Cristina Sorrentino-Schmalisch and Gail Steketee

• Digging Out: Helping Your Loved One Manage Clutter, Hoarding and Compulsive Acquiring by Michael A. Tompkins and Tamara L. Hartl

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Legal and Environmental Health Perspective

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Hennepin County Public Health Department
Public Health Nuisances (PHN) - Types

- **Private Nuisances** – disputes between neighbors
- **Public Nuisances** – concerns of cities, such as noise, junk cars, tall grass, etc.
- **Public Health Nuisances** – concerns of a Board of Health, or other delegated Health programs with an ordinance
PHN - Definitions What are the powers of a Board of Health

  (a) If a threat to the public health such as a public health nuisance, source of filth, or cause of sickness is found on any property, the board of health or its agent shall order the owner or occupant of the property to remove or abate the threat within a time specified in the notice but not longer than ten calendar days.
PHN - Definition

- MN Statutes, Chapter 145A states it is the “act or failure to act” that affects the public's health.
- Only a board of health can determine and order abatement of a PHN using 145A.
- Non-board of health departments write orders based on their local ordinance.
- Must be abated within 10 calendar days.
Notices must be handed to the violator, sent by certified mail or posted on the property.

Depending on the condition the property may need to be posted “unfit for habitation” and entry (i.e. for clean up) may be restricted.

Police may need to monitor to ensure it is not occupied.

Clearance inspection is needed for re-occupancy.
PHN – Practical “Working” Definition

- Has the potential to make people sick.
- Provides harborage or attracts vermin.
- Can cause injury to those directly exposed.
Who is involved?

- Police
- Child/ Adult Protection
- Animal Control
- City Housing Officials
- HAZ MAT Team
- Drug Task Force
- Health Agencies (Social Services)
- Fire Department
- Septic Company's
- Cleaning Company's
- City Councils
- Medical Responders
- Media
- Utility Company's (Gas and Electric)
Hoarding: Environmentally why is it a problem?

- Service workers not able to safely perform their job
- Clear access for emergency personnel
- Fire Load
- Infestations and vermin can migrate to neighbors’ property
- Child and vulnerable adult health and safety
Hoarding: Why Do People Do It?

- Collections
- New Items
- Perceive Value
- Want to Recycle
- Great Deal
Hoarding

- Not able to use the room for the purpose intended.
Hoarder: Issues - Feces
Hoardings: Issues - Access

- Blocked Exits and Windows
- No Clear Paths to Doors and Windows
Hoarding: Clean Up
Hoarding: Clean Up (continued)

- Clean up in progress
- Sometimes it is a process
Hoarding: Cleanup Goal

- Hopefully We Go ...

From This

To This
Hoarding: Managing the Case and Clean-up

- Take a co-worker or go with the Police to every visit, *NEVER go alone!*
- Many need a search warrant
- Document with notes
- Label and date all evidence
- Document with photos
Hoarding: Managing the Case and Clean-up (continued)

- Ask everyone you deal with for a business card for your records, and also give your card out
- Keep copies of everything (i.e. invoices)
- Keep a calendar to track dates and time involvement, in case costs need to be assessed back to the property taxes, or for court appearances
Hoarding: Managing the Case and Clean-up (continued)

- Evaluate the risk of personal injury

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Tyvek suit
  - Boots or shoe covers
  - Niton 95 (N95) mask
  - Head gear (hard hat)
  - Eye protection
Hoarding: What if it is not clean after 10 days?

- Time may be extended (sometimes issues are beyond the control of the property owner)
- The Health Agency may decide to clean the property and assess the property taxes
Hoardings: Why is MNHTF and Env. Health Collaboration Important?

- Chance to discuss with other professionals who work with hoarding issues.
- Learn other’s perspective on hoarding
- Finding out what each person's goals are and how we can help each other
- Support
Dale Fine
Family Member Perspective

Dale Fine
Thank you!

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