Solving the Puzzle: Identifying and Understanding Hoarding Disorder
Goals

- Hoarding Disorder
  - Definition
  - Players Involved
  - Levels of Hoarding
  - Causes
  - Symptoms
  - Dangers
  - Resources
  - Best-Practices
Background-Greg Smith

- Over ten years as a municipal inspector dealing with hoarding situations

- Current
  - Professional Educator
  - Housing Inspector-City of Duluth
  - President-Minnesota Association of Housing Code Officials

- Testified in court on hoarding cases for municipal enforcement efforts and evictions

- Taken extensive training on hoarding

- Unique understanding of hoarding: family member that has Hoarding Disorder
The Puzzle of Hoarding

Person Displaying Hoarding Tendencies

Mental Health Issues

People Affected

Solutions

Dangers
Definition

• DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association)

• May 2013 defining “Hoarding Disorder”
Who Hoards?

- Starts in childhood
- Men hoard more than women
- 5% of the general population hoard to some level (The Hoarding Task Force)
- People with lower income have shown to hoard more than people with higher income
- It is estimated that up to 1.2 million people suffer from compulsive hoarding in the USA
Symptoms

• Clutter will continue to build up and may get to the point that rooms and areas are no longer useable for living

• Indecisive, perfectionism, avoidance, procrastination and high intelligence.
Symptoms

- Persistent Difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them
- Often Hidden from family, friends and neighbors
- Experiences Distress at the thought of getting rid of items
Why Do People Do It?

NO ONE WANTS TO LIVE THIS WAY!!!
Why Do People Do It?

- Occurs in all cultures
- Trigger or Traumatic Event
- (Cromer, Schmidt, and Murphy, 2007)
  - Family History
  - Death
  - Divorce
  - Lost Job
  - Moment in History
Perspective

- Feeling: Items are unique or will be needed at some time
- Assigned emotional significance and remind the person of a better time or happy event
- Creates a “safe” feeling while surrounded by items
- They don’t want to waste
Hoardings is NOT:

- Laziness
- Chronic Disorganization
- Lack of experience organizing
The stages of HOARDING
Scale developed by the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization:

**Level I**
Standard household with a low level of clutter.

**Level II**
Household requires professional organizers.

**Level III**
Household requires organizers and possibly mental health providers.

**Level IV**
Household needs help from a team of service providers, including cleaners.

**Level V**
Help is needed from a range of agencies, including social services and fire safety.
Dangers

- Blocked egress
- Halls
- Stairs
- Windows
- Doorways
- Piles falling
Health and Safety Hazards

- Increased risk of falls
- Being Trapped
Health and Safety Hazards

- Un/In-Sanitary Conditions
  - Food waste
  - Pet waste
  - Human waste
  - Rodents
  - Insects
Emergency Personnel

- Dangers to First Responders
  - Excessive Fire Loading
  - Piles Falling (can’t find patient)
- Not being able to maneuver in the unit
Addressing the Problem

- Communication
  - Don’t use the words: “hoarder, trash, junk”
  - Be compassionate and understanding
  - DON’T JUDGE
  - Work with family members and loved ones
Best Practices

- Plan a visit
- Document everything!
- Create a plan with the tenant and stick to it
  - Written Agreement
  - Offer Services
- Assistance with Cleaning?
- Brief Monitoring Check-in’s
Calling for Help

- Contact authorities when needed
  - Fire
  - Police
  - Attorney
  - Mental Health
Call for Help!!!

- If there is a threat to the health and safety of:
  - A child or minor in unsanitary conditions
  - Vulnerable adult
  - Animals
  - Disabled
  - Danger to other tenants in the building
To Clean or Not to Clean?

- Clean Outs
- Are they effective?
- Recidivism
Resources

- Minnesota Hoarding Task Force
  - https://mnhtf.org/task-force

- Clutter Movement
  - https://www.facebook.com/cluttermovement/

- The Hoarding Project
  - http://thehoardingproject.org/home/
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