

# Addressing Hoarding

## Through a Community Task Force

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IT'S A BIG WORLD. LET'S PROTECT IT TOGETHER.™

# It's a Big World...





# Hoarding

What we think we know

What we do know

The risks; for residents and for the fire service

What we can do



What we think we know...

# Compulsive hoarders may be at risk for health issues due to all of the following except:

- Fire Hazards
- Unsanitary conditions
- Obesity
- Stroke
- Cardiac and respiratory problems

# Which of the following is not a cause of compulsive hoarding?

- Emotional distress about discarding possessions
- A strong emotional attachment toward ones possessions
- Laziness or weakness of character
- Perfectionism
- Trouble deciding what is valuable and what is not

# How many Americans are compulsive hoarders?

- 1 million
- 2 million
- 6 million
- 15 million

# True or False

Not all hoarders excessively collect or save objects, some hoard animals.



**TRUE:** According to the Humane Society of the US 250,000 animals every year – one home had 1,000

# True or False

Hoarding runs in families



**TRUE:** 84% have a family history of a 1<sup>st</sup>  
degree relative according to Johns Hopkins  
University School of Medicine

# True or False

Hoarding symptoms are seen in only in adults



**False:** Average age is 50 but has been documented to start with an onset of 12 years old

# What is hoarding?





What we know...

# Collecting vs. Hoarding



# Clutter vs. Hoarding



# All three symptoms must be present

- Collecting or keeping a large number of possessions due to strong urges to save or distress when discarding.
- The possessions fill rooms, outside portions of property, automobiles to the extent that they cannot be used as they were originally intended
- The possessions cause significant distress or problems with accomplishing day to day activities

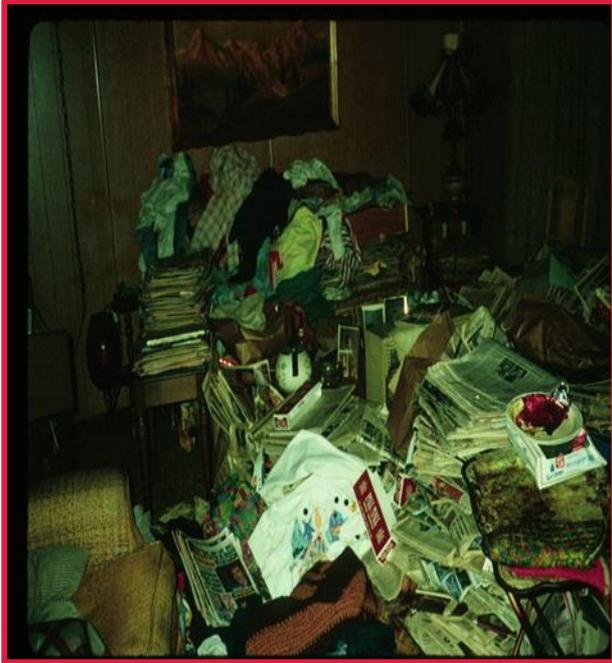
Adapted from Bratiotis, et al., International OCD Foundation



# Features of Hoarding

- Similar in white and nonwhite samples
- 3-5% of adults
- More men than women report hoarding but more women than men seek help
- All socioeconomic but associated with lower income and causes homelessness
- Insight and motivation remain problematic

# Items people collect... newspapers, magazines, clothing, books



# Items people collect... containers, bags, pots and pans, specialty items



# Items people collect... food



## Items people collect... animals



# Animal Hoarding

- Large # of animals, 20+, and not for purpose of breeding and sale
- Overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, lack of nutrition and veterinary care, or evidence of unhealthy conditions
- Reluctance to allow adoption or place in care of others
- Mostly middle age or older women, unmarried and isolated from family
- Cats then dogs with average 30-40

# Contributing factors

- Acquisition - Compulsive buying and collecting
  - On line
  - EBay
  - QVC
  - Amazon
  - Subscriptions
  - Garage sales
  - Rummaging



# Potential Indicators of Hoarding



# Potential Indicators of Hoarding



# Inside...



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# The Risks

# Risks in Homes

- Structure & safety risks:
  - Unstable floorboards/stairs/porch
  - Leaking roof
  - Electrical wires/cords exposed
  - No running water/plumbing problems
  - Flammable items beside heat source, heaters, candles, ovens/burners, electrical appliances, and cords
  - Caving walls
  - No heat/electricity
  - Blocked/unsafe electric heater or vents
  - Storage of hazardous materials/weapons



© Bratiotis, 2009

# Risk to Neighbors and Property

- Increased risk of fire and infestations from insects and rodents



# Residents may be unable to escape because of clutter against doors or windows



Hoarding increased the fire load when there is a fire. A fire burns hotter and faster.



# Hoarding presents fall hazards to residents



# Objects can fall and collapse



# Other Factors for Older Adults

- Availability of Healthy Foods
- Medical Concerns:
  - Dust and Allergens in case of cardiopulmonary disease
  - Ability to find medications amongst the clutter
  - Space to bathe related to skin care issues

# What is the danger to responding firefighters

- They can be at greater risk because of obstructed exits and falling objects.
- Excessive fire loading can lead to collapse.
- Hoarding makes fighting fires and searching for occupants far more difficult.
- <http://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/Hoarding-Linked-Dozen-Local-Fire-Deaths-Since-2013-368378921.html>

# Fire Statistics

Cooking fires (39%)

Heaters, open flames or lamps (22%)

Electrical problems (22%)

Smoking (12%)

63% owner occupied

23% public housing

14% rental property

Harris, 2010

- Fewer than 50% have working smoke alarms
- Average cost for hoarding fire is 15x higher than non-hoarding due to staffing, fire trucks, and time to contain
- 25% of preventable fire fatalities in 10 years





# What can we do?



# Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom

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



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



# Talking With Someone Who Hoards

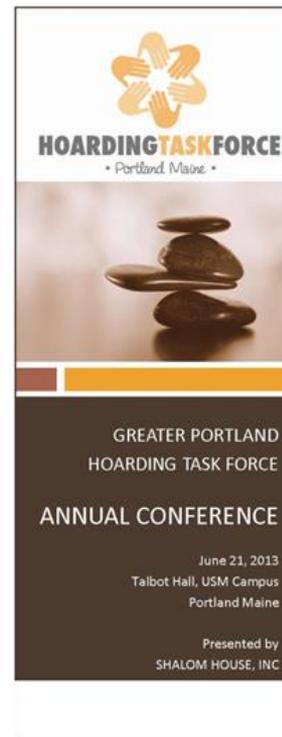
- Be respectful and show concern for the person's safety.
- Match the language of the person.
- Focus on safety issues.
- Show empathy.
- Use person-first language



# Treatment of Possessions

- Avoiding touching objects
- Avoid making suggestions about the person's belongings
- Focus on safety
- Imagine yourself in the client's shoes

# Develop or join a task force for people who hoard



# Who should be included in a task force for people who hoard?



# Primary Partners

- Housing
- Fire
- Public Health
- Animal Control
- Professional Organizing
- Mental Health

Collective and shared wisdom = success



# Potential Task Force Members

- Animal Control Officers
- Code Enforcement Officials
- Vector Control District Personnel
- Community Service Providers
- Protective Service Workers
- Health Care & Mental Health Providers
- Fire Department Representatives
- Housing Representatives
- Professional Organizers
- Biohazard Cleaning Companies
- Attorneys
- Faith Based Organizations
- Family Members

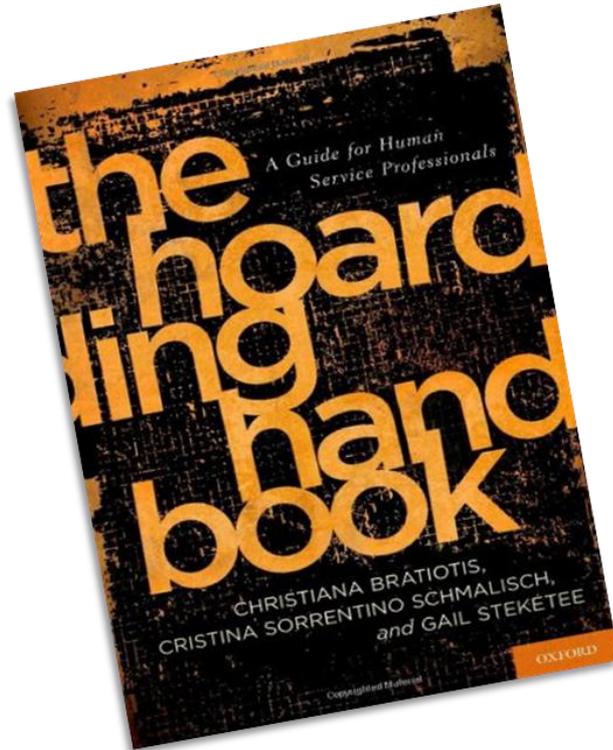
# Fire prevention & fire safety educators share safety information with the public.

- Smoke alarms
- Home sprinklers in homes and apartments
- Escape planning and making sure exits are clear
- Importance of keeping combustibles away from heat sources
- Fall and injury prevention

# Providing assistance and services

- Recognize progress may be slow
- Enlist help
- Use motivation to decide the plan
- Establish an ongoing visitation plan

# The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals (Oxford Press)



# Resources



- Online Resources
- NFPA Journal
- Conference
- Webinars
- Educational flyer
- [www.nfpa.org/education](http://www.nfpa.org/education)



Questions?

# THANK YOU

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