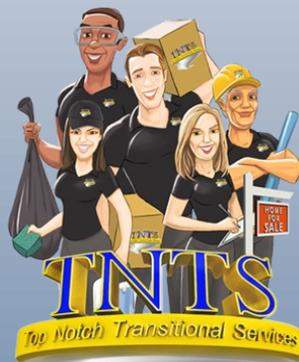

TOP NOTCH TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

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A Guide for Families to Address Hoarding



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About Hoarding Disorders

Hoarding disorder is characterized by the persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of the value others may attribute to these possessions.

The behavior usually has harmful effects—emotional, physical, social, financial, and even legal—for the person suffering from the disorder and family members. For individuals who hoard, the quantity of their collected items sets them apart from people with normal collecting behaviors.

Symptoms of the disorder cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning including maintaining an environment for self and/or others.

While some people who hoard may not be particularly distressed by their behavior, their behavior can be distressing to other people, such as family members or landlords.

In the DSM-5, released by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2013, Hoarding Disorder was added as its own illness with its own criteria. Hoarding disorder was included in the DSM-5 because research shows that it is a distinct disorder with distinct treatments.

Potential consequences of serious hoarding include health and safety concerns, such as fire hazards, tripping hazards, and health code violations. It can also lead to family strain and conflicts, isolation and loneliness, unwillingness to have anyone else enter the home, and an inability to perform daily tasks such as cooking and bathing in the home.

Source: www.psychiatry.org

Recognizing Someone with a Hoarding Disorder

There are scales and questions that a Primary Care Provider or other health care provider can ask a patient, family member or home care provider to determine if hoarding is affecting the patient's quality of life. The industry-wide standard assessment scale in Massachusetts is the HOMES Scale Multi-disciplinary Hoarding Risk Assessment.

The HOMES Assessment was developed in conjunction with the Massachusetts Statewide Steering Committee on Hoarding. This scale assesses health issues, mental health issues, obstacles present in the home, as well as structural and safety issues.

Information about the assessment from Bratiotis, Sorrentino Schmalisch, & Steketee, 2011

How Hoarding Affects the Community

With the U.S. population in the 2010 census at 308.7 million (“state and county quick facts”, US Census Bureau) that would mean there is the possibility of 6-15 million people nationally who may have a prevalence of hoarding.

Studies show that the prevalence of hoarding disorder is estimated at approximately two to five percent of the population. These behaviors can often be quite severe and even threatening. Beyond the mental impact of the disorder, the accumulation of clutter can create a public health issue by completely filling people’s homes and creating fall and fire hazards.

Source: www.dsm5.org

In comparison, according to the National Institute of Aging, there were approximately 4 million people in 2009 with Alzheimer’s. As the Baby Boomers age, hoarding becomes more and more of a community issue.

Source: *Hoarding: Best Practices Guide Winter 2012*

Animal Hoarding

Hoarding of any sort poses significant health concerns for both occupants and nearby residents. Air quality is of particular concern in animal hoarding situations.

Heavy accumulations of feces and urine can damage dwellings beyond repair, release a host of potentially toxic bioaerosols and gases into the air, and create odor problems for neighbors. Disease exposure could occur through inhalation, contact, or via vectors (eg, insects).

Individuals who are immunocompromised (eg, due to HIV, diabetes, chemotherapy) or who have respiratory diseases may be at particular risk. Animal hoarding also creates the potential for spread of zoonotic diseases.

Lack of sanitation, stress, poor health, and lack of veterinary care make hoarding situations the ideal incubator for infectious disease.

Source: www.masslocalinstitute.org/onlinecourses/hoarding/

Hoarding Hazards

For people who live in the home, these risks include:

- tripping and falling over things
- being hurt and even killed when items fall on them
- developing health problems from mold or pests that live in the clutter
- delays in receiving emergency care when emergency workers can't reach them
- injury or even death when fire fighters can't enter or control a rapidly spreading fire
- living for months and even years without vital services like plumbing, electricity, and heating
- eviction because of a lease violation
- having the home condemned due to unsafe or unclean conditions

In addition to these problems that affect people who live in a hoarded home, hoarding presents risks for neighbors, building owners, and for the property itself. These risks include:

- public health problems (e.g., spread of pest infestation) for adjacent apartments and homes
- structural problems because of too many heavy items (for example, books) that are too much for the load limits of the building
- flooding when pipes are in need of repair
- fire from electrical wiring or heating systems in need of repair
- lost property value and of rent income for landlords who must make costly repairs due to hoarding or who have to pay legal fees (e.g., to end a tenant's lease)

Source: Cristina Sorrentino Schmalisch, PhD, LICSW

Treatment Options

Some clients are motivated to seek treatment on their own. Others are pressured to seek treatment by court order after inspections from agencies such as fire and public health departments or the housing authority.

After learning to understand hoarding, cognitive and behavioral treatment can be very helpful. CBT will help the individual learn to discard unnecessary possessions with less distress, diminishing their exaggerated perceived need or desire to save these possessions. They also learn to improve skills such as organization, decision-making, and relaxation. Certain anti-depressant medication may also be helpful and may produce rapid improvement. At this point they are in a position to set rules for what things can and cannot be gotten rid of and to arrange for disposal of unwanted items. It is also at this point in the process that others can be of most help in sorting and hauling items marked for removal.

Source: American Psychiatric Association

Professional Organizers

People with hoarding may seek the services of a professional organizer if they understand their problem as being primarily one of disorganization. Also, working with a professional organizer may be more acceptable to some people than seeking mental health treatment. Professional organizers work to improve the quality of clients' homes or work places through organization.

Professional organizers can provide important help for clients who are getting mental health treatment for hoarding. Working with a professional organizer can give clients critical hands-on help with their hoarded items. Ideally, the professional organizer would contact the therapist and work with them to help the client's hoarding symptoms.

The National Association of Professional Organizers (www.napo.net) provides contact information for the broader group of professional organizers and also provides training opportunities.

Source: Cristina Sorrentino Schmalisch, PhD, LICSW

TNTS is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and has prioritized hoarding as a major public health and medical health issue that must be addressed for individuals and families to be well in their homes. TNTS also has professional clinicians that work with clients and support them in the often difficult process of letting go of the many of the things that they have accumulated over time.

Elder Services

When hoarding occurs in the home of an older adult, special consideration must be given to the risk and capacity of the elder. As a protected class under state and federal laws, older adults must be protected from abuse or neglect which may result from hoarding. In particular, senior centers, councils on aging and area agencies on aging can assist with assessment and intervention of hoarding among elders.

Helping people who hoard understand how their problem interferes in living the life they desire can be a powerful motivator, especially as it pertains to being able to live independently. Additionally, elder service workers who attend to the meaning of important objects—especially those with sentimental meaning or memorabilia from past experiences and life events—can help communicate a sensitivity to the meaning of possessions. This attention to personal treasures can help create and keep the trust needed for continued work on the hoarding problem.

Source: Christiana Bratiotis, PhD, Boston University

Hoarding and the Healthcare System

According to the National Institute of Health, hoarding is often a hidden issue in family medicine. Patients with a pathological hoarding disorder, particularly elderly patients, are often identified after a seminal event, such as a fall or a fire, when their home situation becomes a crisis.

Organic hoarding due to secondary conditions is more common in older patients, owing to a higher likelihood of concurrent conditions. These include dementia, particularly fronto-temporal lobar degeneration, stroke, alcoholism, and severe depression. Brain injury patients and patients with schizophrenia may also display hoarding behaviors. There is a strong correlation between hoarding and mental illness. Animal hoarding may also be associated with, and perhaps caused by, a variety of physical and/or psychological disorders.

Source: Structuring Interdisciplinary Responses to Help People, Animals and Communities at Risk, Published by the Hoarding or Animals Research Consortium, Edited by Gary J. Patronek, Lynn Loar, and Jane N. Nathanson, 2006

A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach is the best way to assist a person who has a hoarding disorder:

- First, helping a patient recognize the affect this has on their mental and physical well-being.
- Second, teaming up with a hoarding specialist/social worker and a transitional home care team to design and implement a short and long-term care plan.
- Third, follow-up with the social worker and health care team at Tufts Health Plan at future appointments.

Community Solutions to Hoarding

Each community has agencies staffed by professions from various disciplines that are likely to respond to hoarding cases. These disciplines may include but are not limited to:

housing, public health (including environmental health), mental health, protective services (including child, adult and elder), aging services, legal (including civil and criminal justice and law enforcement), fire safety, medicine and animal control.

Although members of each of these professions may become involved for somewhat different reasons, the underlying intention is the same—to protect the health and safety of the individuals suffering from and affected by hoarding.

Coordinated Care for Hoarders

Hoarding can pose a number of associated problems in a person's life. As such, the laws, policies and requirements that must be upheld include sanitation, safety, mental health, physical health, animal protection and others. More often than not, several areas of a hoarder's life are affected. Helpful intervention requires professionals to work together to meet legal and ethical regulations while also ensuring the current and future health and safety of the person who hoards and affected others.

In addition to public and government involvement, often private services such as visiting nurses, occupational therapists, professional organizers and professional cleaning companies may need to help.

Coordinated care across agencies can be very helpful in getting into the homes of, and providing stepped care for, those with serious hoarding. We recommend *The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals* for service staff in these agencies.

Source: Bratiotis, C., Schmalisch, C., & Steketee, G. (May, 2011). The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals. New York: Oxford University Press

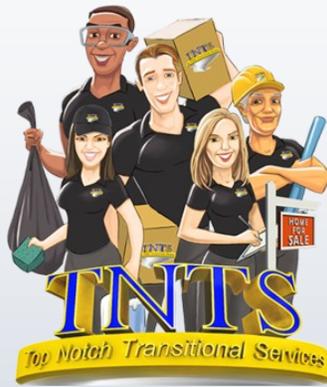
TNTS Solutions for Hoarding Disorder

TNTS is an integral part of a coordinated response to hoarding, to eliminate hoarding threats to safety, health and well-being. The *TNTS Hoarding Emergency Response Services* are emergency services provided when any *Physical Safety Issues* are identified in the home, as noted in the Hoarding Best Practice Committee's *Hoarding Best Practice Guide*.

These services include *Services that are Needed for Medical Safety* such as when respiratory, toxicity, bacterial or viral issues are present. Additionally *Services that are needed for People with Disabilities* that are specific to seniors, disabled people, vets, and others with mental illness and/or behavioral health issues are treated as emergency response services.

TNTS Hoarding Intervention Services include any additional hoarding prevention and intervention services that have the potential to become a greater health or safety hazard.

These require an assessment of the potential for further safety or medical hazards outlined in the TNTS Hoarding Emergency Response Services above, as well as hoarding cleanout and sanitization, and the assessment and remediation of any structural issues.



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