Southwestern Vermont Hoarding Task Force in Rutland County

Goals and purpose of the task force, rating scale, and basics about hoarding disorder

Presenter: Kate Tibbs
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Webinar Presentation
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- Basics about hoarding
- What to look for
- Why people hoard
- Treatment
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Basics about hoarding / hoarding disorder

- What is hoarding?
  - Included in DSM-5
  - Difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of the value
  - Excessive clutter in the home to the point where it becomes unsafe & unhealthy for everyone (pets, too!) in the home

Photo taken by BROC Weatherization team
Basics about hoarding / hoarding disorder continued

- Affects approximately 2-5% of the population; more recent studies have calculated 5% or 1 in 20 people

- Has harmful effects for the person their family members
  - emotional, physical, social, financial, and even legal

- Compulsive hoarding – attempting to decrease stress & anxiety

- Clutter creates falls, health and fire hazards – negatively effects lifestyle

- Quantity of their collected items sets them apart
  - Excessive shopping, collecting trash, bargain shopping
  - Papers, books, clothes, food, furniture, etc.
Characteristics of hoarding

- Men and women of all socioeconomic status & ethnic groups
- The more isolated the person, the worse the hoarding will be (but just because a person is isolated does not mean they have a hoarding issue)
- Strenuous relationship with family/friends because of hoarding
- May have memory issues / short attention span
- Onset age can start as early as 10 years old
- Anxious, depressed, have social phobias, co-morbid diagnoses
- Experienced traumatic event(s)
- Progresses with age

Photo taken by BROC Weatherization team
Characteristics of hoarding continued

- Signs to look for:
  - Frequent conversations about possessions
  - Will not allow you to enter the home, or will only allow you to enter parts of the home
  - Puts off repairs/ paying bills
  - Shops often and acquires more items
  - Believes cleaning/ organizing as a major task
  - Multiple ER visits due to falls or respiratory problems
  - Frequent home shopping network shopper
  - Their car may be filled with items
  - Person may be “living” in their car
Why do people hoard?

- Common themes of hoarding
  - **Sentimental** – connection to important people, places, and events; brings up memories and emotions; may experience exaggerated attachment with inanimate objects and think they have emotions; becomes an extension of self
  - **Instrumental** – “just in case items”, has a clear functional purpose, excessive collection; newspapers, flyers, magazines, shoes, toothbrushes, etc.
  - **Intrinsic** – no particular use for item, seen as appealing, special, or has a unique craftsmanship, views item as beautiful or pretty
Can people be treated for hoarding disorder?

- Person has to WANT help and be willing to change their behaviors
- Most common treatment: *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)* -- develops connections with the person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
  - Strong emphasis on changing the client’s behavior, understanding the motive (increases functioning, rational thinking, and decreases negative feelings)
  - Challenges the thoughts and beliefs about the client’s attachment to hoarded items, addresses the need to collect new items
- Group treatment can be more effective – support groups, Buried in Treasures workshop
- Motivational interviewing; learning new behaviors
- Client themselves should work on how they think, feel and act to have a positive effect on brain functions
- ★ Work with therapists & professionals to develop ways to maintain clutter and hoarding habits, & help prevent relapse into old behaviors ★
Can people be treated for hoarding disorder (continued)?

- Medications can be used – particularly used for depression – studies have found this is not very effective

- Support from family, friends, community, etc.

- Early treatment rules (examples)
  - Team does not touch/throw away without permission
  - Client makes all decisions about possessions
  - Categories are established before handling possessions
  - Client verbalizes decisions
Clutter Image Rating Scale

Clutter Image Rating: Bedroom
Please select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room.
Homeowners and hoarding

- When encountering a homeowner who has hoarding disorder, voice your concern about the conditions of their home and talk about the consequences of living in a hoarded home
  - If there are children in the home, DCF could be contacted and become involved
  - If there are elderly adults in the home, APS could be contacted and become involved

- Ask if you can take pictures of videos; the person may be “blinded” by the condition of their home and not recognize there is a problem

- Contact the town health and safety officer

- If the person has family members or community members who they trust and get along with to help encourage the person to change their living habits
Goals & purpose for the task force

- Provide awareness and training opportunities to professionals and the public

- Identify best practices to improve services and eviction prevention, and to improve the quality of life for people with hoarding disorder

- Recommend and discuss changes to the task force

- Discuss cases to brainstorm ways to support people and certain situations with clients when needed

- Provide an inventory of resources that are available for people to get the help they need/ want through [http://www.broc.org](http://www.broc.org)

- Educate the community and public about hoarding disorder, the need for help, and the resources available to help
Southwestern Vermont Hoarding Task Force Info.

- Meets monthly; 4th Wednesday of every month

- 10:00am-11:00am at BROC (45 Union St., Rutland, VT)

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Sources cited


American Psychiatric Association


Tompkins County Task Force on Hoarding


Books to read!

- Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, & Gail Steketee
- Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things by Randy O. Frost & Gail Steketee
- The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals by Christiana Bratiotis, Cristina Sorrentino Schmalisch, Gail Steketee
- Mess: One Man's Struggle to Clean Up His House and His Act by Barry Yourgrau
- Digging Out: Helping Your Loved One Manage Clutter, Hoarding, and Compulsive Acquiring by Michael A. Tompkins
- What Every Professional Organizer Needs To Know About Hoarding by Judith Kolberg
- Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring: Therapist Guide (Treatments That Work) by Gail Steketee