



HOARDING: A Dangerous Secret

A Report from the
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
November 2006



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A Dangerous Secret

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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AGENCY: COG is a regional organization comprised of elected officials from 20 local governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. COG provides a focus for action and develops sound regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, human services, population growth, public safety, and transportation.

ABSTRACT: Hoarding of objects and animals is a significant problem facing the Washington, DC metropolitan region. This behavior not only impacts the hoarder and the surrounding community, but is also a problem for local governments. Government agencies are currently struggling with how to investigate and intervene in these situations and how to effectively coordinate a response from multiple agencies. A survey of local governments in the metropolitan region was completed which examined hoarding in the region and reviewed the local policies and procedures regarding hoarders.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hoarding of objects and animals is a significant problem facing the Washington, DC metropolitan region. This behavior not only impacts the hoarder and the surrounding community, but is also a problem for local governments. Government agencies are currently struggling with how to investigate and intervene in these situations and how to effectively coordinate a response from multiple agencies. A survey of local governments in the metropolitan region was completed by a regional Hoarding Project Team, brought together by the George Washington University Institute for Regional Excellence in cooperation with COG, which examined hoarding in the region and reviewed the local policies and procedures regarding hoarders.

WHAT IS HOARDING?

Hoarding (or compulsive or pathological hoarding) is a term which is used to describe extreme hoarding behavior in humans. It involves the collection or failure to discard large numbers of objects or animals, even when their storage causes significant clutter and impairment to basic living activities such as moving around the house, cooking, cleaning or sleeping.

While there is no current agreed upon definition of compulsive hoarding in accepted diagnostic criteria, most experts describe the following defining features:

- The acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions (objects or animals) that appear to be useless or of limited value
- Living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed
- Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding

There is no "cure" for compulsive hoarding, meaning there is no treatment that will make the problem go away completely and never come back at all. Research on the psychopathology of hoarding has helped define the components of this problem, but as yet, little is known about age and reasons for onset, family history, course of this disorder, and insight into the problem. To date, only a limited number of laboratory studies have been conducted examining cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features of compulsive hoarding.

WHY IS HOARDING IMPORTANT?

Hoarding is a complex and multifaceted behavioral problem that may make itself known in a number of different ways. Hoarding creates a number of health and safety hazards. Hoarding homes may exhibit a range from simple clutter to ones that require a HAZMAT response. Hoarding creates hazardous conditions that can increase the risk of fire and block entry by public safety personnel. The accumulation of combustible materials, such as newspapers, clothing and rubbish, can pose a severe fire hazard. The amount of combustible materials creates an extremely hot, fast-spreading fire that is difficult to suppress. Escaping the home in a fire can be impossible due to blocked hallways, doorways and windows. In addition, public safety personnel's access to the home can be hampered or blocked. Additionally, hoarding may cause structural damage to buildings. Hoarding can present significant health hazards and can cause disease or

injury to the hoarder, family members and the community. Hoarding can be a potential indicator of mental health problems such as OCD and dementia. Finally, clean-up of hoarding homes can be extremely costly for landlords and local governments.

HOARDING SURVEY

A survey form (see Appendix A) was compiled to solicit specific information on hoarding from local government officials residing in COG's 20 member jurisdictions in suburban Maryland, Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia. The survey asked a series of questions about the respondents' knowledge of and experience with hoarding and, more specifically, how their local governments responded to cases of hoarding. In addition, the survey looked at whether local governments coordinated intervention in hoarding cases among the various relevant agencies.

Approximately thirty-four individuals from fifteen COG member local governments responded to the online survey. Respondents represented a variety of local government agencies including animal control, police, fire, housing, code enforcement, health, social services and adult protective services.

Results from the 2006 Regional Hoarding Survey show 274 reported cases of hoarding in the D.C. region in 2005. Reported cases included both object and animal hoarding. Cases were reported from a variety of local government departments. Care was taken to eliminate possible duplication of hoarding case reports. The numbers presented represent the most conservative estimate possible from survey data received. Several jurisdictions reported that there is no formal tracking of hoarding cases across departments. It is likely that the number of cases reported under represent the actual number of hoarding cases in each jurisdiction. Therefore it is possible that the actual frequency of hoarding case in the region is much higher. Additionally, the cases reported represent only those cases that have come to the attention of a local government agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our analysis, the following recommendations are presented on how the Washington metropolitan region can best address the hoarding problem. As hoarding is a multi-faceted issue requiring multi-faceted responses, effective interventions require a community-coordinated response. A coordinated response allows for a more effective and comprehensive response to hoarding in a jurisdiction. Hoarding is a complex and multifaceted behavioral problem that may make itself known in a number of different ways. Hoarders may express themselves by hoarding objects or animals. Hoarders themselves may be young or elderly. Hoarding homes may exhibit a range from simple clutter to ones that require a HAZMAT response. Therefore, in order for a jurisdiction to effectively deal with this issue, all of the agencies that may either discover, intervene or treat hoarders must coordinate their response.

A coordinated response, however, will likely vary depending on the size of the jurisdiction and the likely number of hoarding cases they may respond to over time. Coordinated responses may range from hoarding related agencies sharing information via phone or e-mail as they arise, coordinating a response through a lead agency, or by forming a Hoarding Task Force that meets on a regular basis. Education and training regarding the multi-modal aspects of hoarders and hoarding behavior for all government agencies involved in a coordinated response is also an important consideration.

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WHAT IS HOARDING?



You probably have heard stories about the “pack rat” down the street with a house full of newspapers or the “eccentric” old woman who has 100 cats. These stories referred to a phenomenon and a malady that is largely a secret, hidden away from the eyes of friends, neighbors and co-workers.

They refer to hoarding, an issue that may, on the surface, merely seem odd. Hoarding, however, can have serious consequences for the hoarder themselves, the communities in which they live and the local governments that may have to deal with them.

Hoarding (or compulsive or pathological hoarding) is a term which is used to describe extreme hoarding behavior in humans. It involves the collection or failure to discard large numbers of objects or animals, even when their storage causes significant clutter and impairment to basic living activities such as moving around the house, cooking, cleaning or sleeping.

While there is no current agreed upon definition of compulsive hoarding in accepted diagnostic criteria (such as the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), Frost and Hartl¹ describe the following defining features:

- The acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value
- Living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed
- Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding



The behavior of hoarding may be an expression of various psychological conditions. Because of this, it has been difficult to place in a specific or singular diagnostic category. People who hoard vary in age and sex, and the onset of hoarding behaviors differs from person to person. It is not clear whether compulsive hoarding is a condition in itself, or simply a symptom of other related conditions. Several studies have reported a correlation between hoarding and the presence and / or severity of obsessive-compulsive disorder

(OCD). Hoarding behavior is also related to obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD). However, some people displaying compulsive hoarding behavior show no other signs of what is usually considered to be OCD, or OCPD.² Compulsive hoarding may also be related to impulse control disorders (such as impulsive buying or stealing), depression, social anxiety, bipolar disorder and certain personality traits.³

Hoarding behavior can begin early in life but is more prevalent in older adults. Hoarders can be of any educational or socio-economic level. They are unaware that their living circumstances pose a danger to themselves and to others and they are characteristically unable to change their unsafe conditions on their own volition. Hoarders may accumulate what most consider to be "trash", such as old newspapers, magazines and general rubbish. However, hoarders may also accumulate new store bought items as well. Compulsive buyers may have homes filled to the brim with new, unopened and unused items.

Some researchers have guessed that about half of one percent of the population suffers from compulsive hoarding, but the actual number may be much higher. People usually start hoarding during childhood or early adolescence, although the problem usually does not become severe until the person is an adult. Compulsive hoarding may run in families. Many people with compulsive hoarding do not recognize how bad the problem really is. Often, it is a family member who is most bothered by the clutter.⁴

SIGNS OF HOARDING:

- Extreme collection and storage of items in the home and in the yard
- Accumulation of combustible materials (newspapers, magazines and rubbish)
- Blocked exits (doors/windows)
- Narrow pathways in the home
- Rat and/or insect infestations
- Rotting food and/or used food containers
- Human and/or animal waste
- Long-term neglect of home maintenance
- Non-working utilities, such as heat, running water, sewer, refrigeration⁵

WHAT IS ANIMAL HOARDING?

While less prevalent, animal hoarding poses a serious health threat to the resident, the community, and the animals being kept. Animal overpopulation in a home leads to unhealthy waste accumulation. It also leads to animal starvation, disease and decomposing remains of dead animals. Typically, an animal hoarder is unaware of the filth and odor actually present in and around the home, and insists the animals are being cared for appropriately. The animals most frequently involved are cats, dogs, farm animals and birds. Characteristics of animal hoarders include:

- There are a large number of animals present.
- The caretaker does not provide the minimal standards of care, and neglect often results in starvation and death.
- The caretaker is neither able to provide this minimum care nor able to appreciate the impact of this on the animals, the household and the human occupants of the dwelling.
- The caretaker fails to act or recognize the negative impact of the collection on themselves, others and the animals.



- There is often an extreme difference between the hoarder's public persona and his/her clandestine private life.
- Unless expert psychiatric help is obtained, recidivism is common and hoarders usually return to old ways, even if convicted of cruelty to animals.

Animal Hoarding by definition is a condition in which animals are deprived of even minimal care. The degree of deprivation varies in each situation, depending on how long it occurs before discovery. As conditions deteriorate and crowding increases, irritating odors develop from accumulated feces and urine, disease may spread, injuries are not treated, sick animals are ignored and the early stages of starvation begin. As conditions worsen, animals die from starvation and untreated illness or injury. It is not unusual for dead animals to be found among the living with cannibalization having begun. Even when confronted with how they are living - feces deep on the floor, dead animals laying about the home, and other horrendous conditions - the hoarder often fails to recognize there is anything wrong.⁶



CAN HOARDING BE TREATED?

There is no "cure" for compulsive hoarding, meaning there is no treatment that will make the problem go away completely and never come back at all. Research on the psychopathology of hoarding has helped define the components of this problem, but as yet, little is known about age and reasons for onset, family history, course of this disorder, and insight into the problem. To date, only a limited number of laboratory studies have been conducted examining cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features of compulsive hoarding.



Research studies using antidepressant medications (that increase the level of serotonin activity in the brain) show that some people with compulsive hoarding respond well to these medications. However, many do not. People with compulsive hoarding do not appear to respond as well to medications as do people with other kinds of obsessive-compulsive symptoms.⁷

Existing treatments for OCD have shown little benefit for compulsive hoarding. Several suggestions have been offered to explain this phenomenon. Hoarding patients are underrepresented in the treatment outcome literature, in part because they frequently

refuse treatment, perhaps due to poor insight or awareness of their condition, making development of effective treatments difficult. With regard to behavioral treatments, hoarders display perfectionistic behaviors and magical ideas about discarding that interfere with usual behavioral treatments for OCD. Most reports agree that treatment of hoarding is problematic.



Modest success has been achieved with the use of specialized interventions based directly on a model of the psycho-pathology of compulsive hoarding. These interventions have included comprehensive assessment, education, practice in decision making and organizing, exposure to non-acquisition and discarding, and cognitive restructuring, all of which are directed at the major manifestations of hoarding: disorganization, compulsive acquisition, and difficulty discarding. Motivational treatments and relapse prevention methods to consolidate gains over time should also be considered. After motivational problems are addressed, treatment should focus first on organizing, rather than discarding, items in the household to avoid asking clients to discard valued possessions before adequate trust in the therapist and confidence in treatment benefits are developed. Difficulty discarding can be addressed via cognitive interventions to reduce problematic beliefs and systematic exposures.⁸

WHY IS HOARDING IMPORTANT?

Hoarding is a complex and multifaceted behavioral problem that may make itself known in a number of different ways. Hoarding creates a number of health and safety hazards. Hoarding homes may exhibit a range from simple clutter to ones that require a HAZMAT response. Hoarding creates hazardous conditions that can increase the risk of fire and block entry by public safety personnel. The accumulation of combustible materials, such as newspapers, clothing and rubbish, can pose a severe fire hazard. The amount of combustible materials creates an extremely hot, fast-spreading fire that is difficult to suppress. Escaping the home in a fire can be impossible due to blocked hallways, doorways and windows. In addition, public safety personnel's access to the home can be hampered or blocked. Additionally, hoarding may cause structural damage to buildings. Hoarding can present significant health hazards and can cause disease or injury to the hoarder, family members and the community. Hoarding can be a potential indicator of mental health problems, such as OCD and dementia. Finally, clean-up of hoarding homes can be extremely costly for landlords and local governments.⁹

GENERAL RESPONSES TO HOARDING

Although animal and object hoarding cases that have been presented in the media are clear as to the health and safety hazards and possible mental health issues they present, identifying a hoarder and/or intervening before the situation gets to these extreme proportions is not so easy. It is not clear at what point the line has been crossed and a "pack rat" has become a hoarder. There is no specific number of animals that suddenly turns someone into an animal hoarder. Furthermore, the accumulation of animals and objects often goes unseen, behind closed doors. Finally, because individuals are protected by privacy rights, assessment and intervention can be very challenging.

Frequently, neighbors or family members are the first to suspect or identify the hoarder. If the person refuses to acknowledge a problem or accept help, efforts may be made to get a local government agency involved to leverage intervention through allegations that the conditions are a health and safety violation or that the person is unable to care for themselves or the animals in their possession.

The Federal Law *Camara vs. Municipal Court* 387 US 23(1967) acknowledged that administrative searches are a different concept than a criminal search. Many jurisdictions follow this in the way they conduct investigations or assessments and respond to complaints. For example, animal control responds to animal complaints. There are

State codes and county ordinances which various agencies work under that dictate how they can respond to and investigate reports of hoarding, and what actions they can take all the while balancing the public and private rights of citizens.



For example, animal control can investigate complaints of animal abuse and prosecute using animal cruelty laws if those allegations are confirmed . In some localities, building code violations that involve safety and sanitation can prompt intervention. However, ordinances may differ by locality, as some require “direct knowledge” of the living space and not just a suspicion for investigations to proceed. This can present difficulties in being able to conduct an investigation if someone has not witnessed that there is a violation. Although both building code and health code violations may exist, intervention may depend on what agency can investigate according to the specific county ordinance. In 2001, Illinois became the first state to pass a law that specifically addresses animal hoarding. Animal welfare groups have heralded the Illinois law as model legislation and some states are following suit, providing law enforcement with tools for prosecuting animal hoarders. The Illinois law has several components that experts believe are important. The law:

- Defines an animal hoarder
- Emphasizes that the hoarder does not recognize the problem
- Increases the penalty for animal hoarding
- Recommends psychiatric help for offenders¹⁰

At times there may be concern that individuals are unable to care for themselves or are a danger to themselves. If children are involved, the conditions may present an abuse or neglectful situation to the children. In these situations, human service agencies are often contacted. Adult Protective Service agencies can provide assessments and court reports for guardianship and protective placements for older and vulnerable adults. However, having an unsanitary house does not automatically justify a need for guardianship. States also have statutory standards regarding dangerousness to self or others, where, if treatment is assessed to be necessary and refused, can result in a person being involuntarily hospitalized. The dangerousness of the hoarding situation, however, is generally a crisis or imminent in nature. A hoarder who may have created a fire hazard for the entire apartment building in which they live would not necessarily meet the criteria for involuntary hospitalization, as the danger does not represent a homicidal or suicidal threat. A comprehensive review of state and local health, safety and animal cruelty laws, codes and regulations would assist local governments in how best to approach these cases.

Since the hoarding situation is not always clear and public and private rights must be properly balanced, it is important to have collaboration, where possible, among relevant agencies for interventions to be comprehensive and successful. In some cases, such as as those at human service agencies where confidentiality of the individual's private information is protected, collaboration may be limited. However, finding a way to intervene before a significant hazard is created is the aim of all the agencies involved and important to the hoarder's family and citizens in the surrounding community.

HOARDING SURVEY

Hoarding is not only a mental health issue for the hoarders themselves, but one that typically requires a response from local governments. With this in mind a regional Hoarding Project Team, brought together by the George Washington University Institute for Regional Excellence in cooperation with COG, conducted a survey of local government professionals regarding their experience with hoarding in the national capitol region and ways in which they respond to cases of hoarding. The 2006 Regional Hoarding Survey provides a first glimpse of this phenomenon in the Washington

metropolitan region. Please note that this was only a preliminary survey used to gain some general and initial data about hoarding in the national capitol region. Results of the survey are limited to those who chose to respond. We did not receive responses from all potential agencies in each jurisdiction. Therefore, results reported cannot be considered representative of every jurisdiction. Rather, they are simply descriptive. Subsequent hoarding surveys may attempt to elicit more comprehensive responses from all relevant government agencies within a jurisdiction.

METHODOLOGY

A survey form (see Appendix A) was compiled to solicit specific information on hoarding from local government officials residing in COG's 20 member jurisdictions in suburban Maryland, Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia. The survey asked a series of questions about the respondents' knowledge of and experience with hoarding and, more specifically, how their local governments responded to cases of hoarding. In addition, the survey looked at whether local governments coordinated intervention in hoarding cases among the various relevant agencies. Survey questions included:

1. How aware are you of the hoarding issue?
2. How prevalent is hoarding in your jurisdiction?
3. How many times has your agency responded to this issue over the past year?
4. What types or forms of hoarding have you encountered? Is one type more prevalent than another (objects vs. animals, etc.) in your jurisdiction?
5. Has there been any data collected on hoarding in your jurisdiction?
6. Does your jurisdiction have formal policy or procedure when responding to hoarding situations, such as a task force or a lead agency?
7. Do you have any recommendations on ways to improve the response to hoarding (e.g. new policies, procedures, coordination, regulations, laws)?

Distribution lists from relevant COG committees (see Appendix A) were used to e-mail the widest range possible of local government professionals who may have encountered hoarding. Those surveyed included representatives from social services, public safety, health, agencies on aging, mental health, housing and animal services.

RESULTS

Approximately thirty-four individuals from fifteen COG member local governments responded to the online survey. Respondents represented a variety of local government agencies including animal control, police, fire, housing, code enforcement, health, social services and adult protective services.

FREQUENCY

Results from the 2006 Regional Hoarding Survey (Table 1) show 274 reported cases of hoarding in the D.C. region in 2005. Reported cases included both object and animal

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF HOARDING CASES

Locality	Estimated Number of Cases in 2005
Arlington County	34
City of Alexandria	11
City of Falls Church	4
City of Greenbelt	4
Manassas City	2
City of Rockville	2
District of Columbia	12
Fairfax City	5
Fairfax County	150
Frederick County	9
Loudoun County	2
Montgomery County	37
Prince Georges County	0
Prince William County	2
Takoma Park	0
TOTAL	274

hoarding. Cases were reported from a variety of local government departments. Care was taken to eliminate possible duplication of hoarding case reports. The numbers represent the most conservative estimate possible from survey data received. Several jurisdictions reported that there is no formal tracking of hoarding cases across departments. It is likely that the number of cases reported under represent the actual number of hoarding cases in each jurisdiction. Therefore, it is possible that the actual frequency of hoarding cases in the region is much

higher. Additionally, the cases reported represent only those cases that have come to the attention of a local government agency.

Those local governments reporting the highest numbers of hoarding cases also were those that reported a higher level of coordinated response or information sharing among different departments. For example, Fairfax County and Arlington County in Virginia have specific Hoarding Task Forces set up to deal with hoarding cases. One respondent stated that hoarding was:

"...more prevalent than originally thought. Prior to 2005, the office would occasionally collaborate with the county's Adult Protective Services Office. No real statistics were kept. In early 2005 our office took a proactive role and the County Task Force was established."

- Captain Tom Polera, Fire Marshall, Arlington County

HOARDING TYPE

Of those respondents reporting direct knowledge of hoarding cases, the majority (n = 21) responded that the main type of hoarding cases encountered were object hoarders. A smaller number (n = 11) reported either also experiencing cases of animal hoarding or exclusively seeing animal hoarding cases (e.g., respondents from departments of animal control). Of those reporting cases of animal hoarding, almost half reported specific cases of cat hoarding.

OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF HOARDING

Survey respondents from five jurisdictions reported having an official government definition of hoarding (Table 2). These jurisdictions include the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, the City of Falls Church and Fairfax County in Virginia and the City of Greenbelt in Maryland. Official definitions of hoarding can be important because hoarding cases can become known through several different local government departments from fire or police to social services. A common definition can assist in the identification of hoarding cases in the field and at the department level.

TABLE 2: DEFINITIONS OF HOARDING

Locality	Official Definitions of Hoarding
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hoarding behavior is defined as "the acquisition of and failure to discard things that are useless or of no value, living spaces cluttered enough to prevent the activity that the space was designed for and sufficient distress or impairment of functioning (may include impending eviction, financial hardship due to excessive buying, risk of removal of children by authorities) caused by the hoarding (Frost and Hartl)
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City uses the Frost & Hartls definition of clinical hoarding: (1) the acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be of useless or of limited value; (2) living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed; and (3) significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding.
City of Falls Church, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sec. 14-1. Unsanitary conditions--Correction. All matters affecting the environmental health of the city shall be included within the duties of the police and the sanitarian, under the direction of the city manager, who shall require reports in writing concerning matters of action or observation

	by the police with respect to unsanitary conditions in the city. Any unsanitary condition, including unsightly accumulation of refuse, rubbish, trash or stagnant water shall be abated as speedily as possible by the person responsible for the existence thereof or, upon the refusal or neglect of such person to do so, by a person designated by the city manager, at the expense of the offender.
City of Greenbelt, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoarding is a complex psychological disorder often linked to an anxiety/or depressive disorder. It occurs when a person acquires and saves possessions that have either little or no value. The person then experiences anxiety when called upon to discard of the possessions. The possessions result in clutter, sometimes to the point that they create a safety hazard.
Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoarding is the excessive collection and retention of things or animals until they interfere with day to day functions such as home, health, family, work, and social life.

PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

Dealing with hoarding cases can be extremely complex. Intervention with hoarders must take place at several levels and there is a consistent reported amount of repetition and recidivism with hoarders. Survey respondents were asked to list any problems or obstacles they may have encountered when dealing with hoarding cases in their jurisdictions (Table 3).

TABLE 3: PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

Locality	Problems or Obstacles Encountered Dealing With Hoarding Cases
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting consent to inspect is sometimes a challenge in which we have obtained warrants. Seizure of one’s property is the biggest obstacle when dealing with a property we have determined as an unsafe structure. Many conversations have taken place with the County Attorney’s Office.
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First was getting the hoarder to realize they have a problem. Once that obstacle has been overcome, what to do with live animals? Our shelter could not take in all of the cats. I allowed the women time to work with cat rescue groups/adoption organizations but it took months to reduce the number to a legal number (we allow 3 dogs or 4 cats per dwelling). • 1. Hoarder is often uncooperative as they don't understand that they have a problem or don't think that the problem affects others. They believe that they should be left alone and that government agencies shouldn't get involved with their style of living. 2. Refusal of hoarder to accept offered assistance/city services 3. Soliciting cooperation from sources reporting the problem to agree to an affidavit to allow an inspection warrant to be obtained 4. Limited affordable housing or housing

	<p>alternatives and limited relocation money when hoarder must be removed from property for an extended period of time 5. Limited options/money for off-site storage of ""valuables"" or items belonging to the hoarder.</p>
City of Greenbelt, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some clients we encounter have other mental illnesses in combination with the hoarding behavior, making it difficult to come up with a rational plan to address the unsafe and unsanitary conditions of their home.
City of Manassas, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication between agencies.
City of Rockville, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not one body or group owns the problem - there is no coordinated mechanism to address the problem to give the hoarder treatment, intervention and support.
District of Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the hoarder to realize that they have a problem, they are not rescuing the animals. Majority of the animals in their custody are not healthy (sick or injured). Conditions where the animals are maintained are hazardous to their health and the animal's health. As a result of the animals not being sterilized they are adding to the over population of animals. Getting them to understand the concept of proper animal care and euthanasia. Last but not least, including the Social Service/ Mental Health Departments. • Mainly access into the premises and willingness to cooperate with the officials to enable them to assist the hoarding person and the animals under their care. • Accessibility to private property • These are very difficult cases to work. Frequently the hoarding client has mental issues which contribute to the hoarding behavior, but they are not so mentally impaired as to be determined to be incompetent. The question of safety for both the client and the neighborhood is competing with the individual's right to self determination. Imposing a community standard of what is acceptable inside of an individual's home is difficult. In some instances, Adult Protective Service has received reports about hoarding situations and our investigation does not confirm a real health risk or safety risk for the client. However, the neighbors want the house cleaned up. We are seeing more of these types of situations in neighborhoods that are in transition with newer, higher income residents moving in and complaining about a house in the neighborhood that has a lot of clutter.
Fairfax City, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining enough evidence to obtain a search warrant before the situation becomes horrendous. • It is generally addressed as a code enforcement problem, but it is really a mental health issue.
Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of ability on the part of Health Department and Fire Marshal's to gain access to the home. Lack of training on search warrants. • The ability to resolve these types of issues on a timely basis. I

	continue to have "open" cases and we are beginning to see repeaters. The chronic repeat nature of the condition.
Frederick County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the only shelter in Frederick County, the biggest obstacle is housing the animals in a shelter that is at or close to capacity. Each hoarding case involves animals not vetted, thus medical expenses associated with the animal's health are always a consideration. Animal welfare organizations and rescue groups tend to weigh on the side of saving all of the animals and seem to overlook the healthy, adoptable animals available at the shelter. There are no existing county/city codes to affectively address the issue. Building codes address new construction and remodeling but not existing situations that need to be condemned or deemed unlivable. Environmental codes need to be strengthened regarding infestations and proper sewage disposal.
Montgomery County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes the situation is not known to community resources until the point at which condemnation or eviction may be imminent, resulting in a housing crisis. We are in a high cost of living area so if we use the housing inspectors to cite the person, if they do not comply they could become homeless which is even worse for them. The most difficult problem is gaining entry into the dwelling, especially in owner occupied single family homes. Multi-family rental properties are easier to access. The property managers will work with us to get entry. Hoarders are usually mentally ill, have obsessive-compulsive disorders, or are in a state of denial. Also hoarders are often well educated, highly manipulative and aware of their right to live the way they want to if considered mentally competent.

NORMAL COURSE OF ACTION WHEN DEALING WITH HOARDING

The survey also asked about the normal procedures local governments use when dealing with hoarders (Table 4). Seven of the twelve jurisdictions who responded to this question referred to some level of coordinated response when dealing with this issue in their jurisdiction.

TABLE 4: TYPICAL COURSE OF ACTION WITH HOARDERS

Locality	Procedures Used With Hoarders
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community referrals are received and processed based on each department's criteria and timeframes. Entry points for referrals are most commonly received by the following departments/programs: Department of Human Services/Adult Protective Services, Community, Planning, Housing & Development/Code Enforcement and the Arlington County Fire Department/Fire Marshall's Office. Animal Welfare League or Department of Homeland Security

	Emergency Mental Health may also receive referrals. When this occurs, referrals are redirected to one of the three primary entry points, although staff should respond to an emergency or remain involved in a collaborative manner.
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This depends on how the issue is brought to the attention of City agencies. Typically, staff from the Code Enforcement Bureau (CE) responds to complaints and investigates for property maintenance and fire code/safety issues. CE Staff then coordinates with other City agencies - Mental Health, Office on Aging, Child Protective Services; Landlord Tenant etc as need dictates. Often, the property needs to be vacated for Fire and Property Maintenance Code issues (Life-Safety) and short-term relocation assistance is provided by a Social Service agency. If Hoarder refuses assistance, a local task force to include reps from aforementioned agencies and the City Attorney's Office is convened to determine next course of action (i.e.: establish legal guardian ship through Courts).
City of Falls Church, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination among departments and since we contract fire health services, among contractors; lack of services available to deal with mental issues of hoarders; length of time required to move forward with public process.
City of Greenbelt, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Code Enforcement will explain code violations, and what is entailed in correcting them. If it seems the violations are all or partly the result of a suspected mental illness, they make referral to CARES. They may also refer if there is going to be an eviction, or temporary displacement. CARES counselors would meet with client in our offices to make appropriate referrals, and/or offer ongoing therapy.
City of Manassas, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We collaboratively like to include the fire marshal or zoning officer to help in the investigation. They can have a more immediate authority and impact on the situation, when applicable. When we receive a complaint of animal hoarding an Animal Control Officer is sent to the location to try to make contact with the owner of the house (and animals). If the animals are in rather healthy condition, we attempt to work with the person to begin to reduce the numbers of animals. We begin by making sure the owner has all the animals spayed/neutered. Then we work with them to make sure they do not obtain anymore animals. This has worked with the last two cases that we have had. We have not had a case that involved massive numbers of animals in ill health.
City of Rockville, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually, it is identified by a social worker, code inspector, police officer or animal control. They contact me because no one else in my (social services) organization knows what to do-- resources are limited in intervening.
District of Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It depends on the extent of the case. 24 hr notification to contact our (Public Health) division. An official notification with violations that were in visual sight, and corrective measures to remedy the situation. If the situation is beyond our control we would still conduct the initial inspection, then it is referred to the Washington Humane Society for further investigation (in cases of animal hoarding). DC has a neighborhood project that mobilizes a variety of

	<p>agencies to respond to a variety of types of complaints. Some of the hoarding cases have fallen into this area and multiple agencies descend onto a client to try to resolve the problem. Sometimes a referral will be made to APS and we will investigate, but we are trying to avoid being part of a team that's primary focus seems to be to clean out ratty homes in order to meet a new standard imposed by new people moving into the neighborhood. Working with hoarders requires a significant amount of case management intervention, relationship building, and support services.</p>
Fairfax City, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We first determine the severity of the case and whether the person will be able to clear the accumulation without help. We will try to contact family if available and mental health assistance if warranted by the circumstances. We can provide extra trash collection if the person is willing, and will also attempt to locate other resources, such as "Christmas in April" and others. In some cases we can use City funds for repairs, which become a lien on the property.
Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an inspector is from a (Fairfax County) Task Force agency considered a primary responder discovers the condition they can call in any other agency or assistance. Normally this includes one of the four primary responder agencies. Currently, Task Force members respond 24 hours a day. • The agency receiving the call may choose to investigate the situation themselves OR notify other agencies based on received information and a joint/ team inspection is scheduled. At times, the Hazmat team, PD EOD team, and CPS are notified for assistance.
Frederick County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntarily gain support from the owner of the animals and work towards providing assistance with spay/neuter, vet care, and supplies. Dependant on the conditions of the residence and the animals, criminal prosecution is evaluated. When cooperation and education is non effective, search and seizure and/or criminal charges are initiated. • A visit to the home by Adult Protective Services. Then APS makes referrals to the Building Inspector, Environmental Health Department, and Fire Marshall. Local animal control is contacted if there are animals at risk.
Loudoun County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Adult Protective Services we respond to hoarding situations that involve elderly and disabled adults. I can only speak to these situations. We conduct APS assessments and offer assistance when appropriate. This has included but not limited to obtaining MH evaluations, counseling with the individual(s), and supporting the client, family members and community supports in helping the individuals clear out, remove trash and items and clean. In situations in which individuals do not have family or supports to help we may assist by developing plans with the clients, arranging for companies to come in remove trash and clean essential rooms in apartments and homes (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and living room). We attempt to link individuals to Mental Health for counseling to try and deal with the underlying issues and to try and prevent continued or resumption of hoarding behavior. There are times, depending on the particulars of a situation, when we work

	<p>cooperatively with other departments. These departments may make the referral to us or visa versa. These include: Animal Control, Law Enforcement, Mental Health, Health Department, Zoning, etc. General case management services have also been provided such as securing medical care, financial benefits and community services.</p>
Montgomery County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use the housing/code inspectors, animal control when applicable, health and human services agencies like adult protective services, our mobile crisis team, and our assertive community treatment team to determine what the best course of action is for each individual. • Hoarding situations typically come to the attention of code enforcement officials, if there is a health risk; child welfare, if it is a child neglect situation; or aging and disability if it involves a vulnerable (elderly and/or disabled) adult. It comes to the attention of our agency or the police if there is an acute mental health crisis. • Normally we try and get consent from the individual to enter the home. If not, we can then obtain a search and seizure warrant provided we have probable cause. The animals are removed and taken to the shelter for housing and treatment. Under County Code we can refuse to return animals that have been seized. The individual can appeal the seizure to an Animal Matters Hearing Board. Usually we are successful however at getting a voluntary relinquishment on the animals. Depending on the severity, charges of cruelty may be brought against the owner. Also, depending on the living conditions and/or health of the individual, other county agencies may be notified of the situation i.e. Housing, Social Services etc.
Prince William County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the situation one or more of the following multi-agency would be contacted: Social Services, Mental Health, Property Code Enforcement, Environmental Health, a Veterinarian, Police, and Commonwealth Attorney. • Contact appropriate agency i.e.: Animal Control, Zoning, Fire Marshal
Takoma Park, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it were an animal situation, we would work with the Montgomery County PD Animal Services Division to see what needed to be done for the welfare of the animals. Other types might involve a request for a visit to the subject by the Montgomery County Crisis Center's response team, to evaluate the mental condition of the subject to determine if psychological intervention was warranted.

FORMAL PROCEDURES FOR HOARDING TASK FORCES

Some jurisdictions felt that hoarding was a significant enough problem for a task force to address the issue (Table 5). "A Hoarding Task Force combines the resources of county agencies to provide a coordinated response to residential hoarding when it threatens

life, safety and property.”¹¹ Several jurisdictions that cited the existence of a hoarding task force provided information on how they operated.

TABLE 5: FORMAL PROCEDURES FOR HOARDING TASK FORCES

Locality	Hoarding Task Force Policies and Procedures
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our current policy is in draft form and should be finalized in 2006. The lead agency as been identified as a joint group, DHS/ APS, CPHD/Code Enforcement and the ACFD/ Fire Marshall's Office.
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While not a formal, established policy or procedure, there is an informal coordination of City agencies. Staff in all agencies coordinate when responding to a hoarding case (although it may not be initially received as such) to try to have as much help available at the outset as is possible to address various needs of the hoarder or other persons in the building. Designated agency reps making up the "Hoarding Task Force" meet after incidents to follow-up on the actions taken and to determine if there are additional needs to be met.
City of Falls Church, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Fire Marshall and Social worker, and health department if appropriate, to do home visit and work with hoarder. If not able to work with hoarder we are dependent on Fire Marshall to take court action. May require input from zoning, Building Official and Refuse inspection in some cases.
Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence on the home usually gets all the Task Force members to a scene at the same time. If we have enough knowledge about the home and its occupants and it meets a full involvement we usually meet and make a plan and determine who has command of the scene. • Notification of an issue comes through many different channels. One of the four primary agencies, Health, FMO, Animal Control/ Police Department, or Social Services, would do an investigation, take necessary action, notify support agencies, and through legal means, gain compliance. • Health Dept, Environmental Dept is the lead agency. Who ever knows about it first calls the others.
Frederick County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We (Animal Control) are the lead agency and our SOPs call for photographing, tagging, physical exam by vet at the scene or at the Shelter upon arrival. We strive for relinquishment of the animals to assist in placing of those animals in an appropriate environment as soon as possible. Documentation of the conditions, interviews of witnesses and owner(s) to assure successful prosecution.
Montgomery County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County recently formed a Task Force comprised of staff from Social Services, Child Protective Services, Housing, Animal Services and Fire Marshall. There has only been one meeting which was organizational in nature.

What events lead to the formation of the local government hoarding task forces?
 Several respondents cited the importance of a coordinated response (Table 6).

TABLE 6: WHY DID THE TASK FORCE FORM?

Locality	Reasons for Forming a Hoarding Task Force
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After repeatedly coming across instances of hoarding we saw the need to develop a formal coordinated response to the issue in the form of a task force
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1994, after a series of hoarding cases, staff from Code Enforcement and Mental Health began talking about this need in the community and how best to proactively address it. Representatives from various agencies (Code, Mental Health, Social Services, Housing, and City Attorney) met and developed forms for tracking cases and assigning the best agency to address certain needs. The "Task Force" then met periodically to follow-up on cases and to discuss needs in the community. Again, there is not a formally established task force or governing regulation on the subject of hoarding. The City's approach was to develop a compassionate care plan through the informal collaboration and cooperation of agencies to address such issues with the hoarder as: short or long term housing; fire/life safety; counseling; services for financial assistance, available clean out services etc.
City of Falls Church, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In nascent stages of trying to take lead through Health and Human Services as part of larger effort to coordinate health and public safety complaints.
Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [In] 1998, [there was a] six person fatal fire in a vacated dwelling. Follow up discussions revealed that there needed to be coordination between agencies that had similar legal jurisdiction over a property or occupants. It also revealed the hazards of these events to public safety personnel and the expenses to the jurisdiction in pursuing safe housing conditions. • Staff from various agencies began working together to handle the "tough" cases. This led to formal meetings and eventually a Task Force that meets regularly. The Task Force began in 1999.
Montgomery County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We decided to try a form a task force as more of these cases came to light. We know that several agencies need to be involved and this involvement needs to be coordinated. Sometimes three agencies may be working on the same case and we don't realize that we have that situation.

IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO HOARDING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

A number of respondents provided recommendations on how the response to hoarding at the local government level could be changed or improved (Table 7). A common theme throughout the responses is a need for public education about hoarding and

more coordination among local government agencies when responding to a hoarding case.

TABLE 7: IMPROVING THE RESPONSE TO HOARDING

Locality	RECOMMENDATIONS
Arlington County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Please see the Appendix for documents related to the newly formed Arlington County Hoarding Task Force.
City of Alexandria, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate ourselves better about this very complex issue and then establish and broadcast a task force. • There needs to be a more formal established process for dealing with this subject on the local level - either through the regulatory process (i.e.; City Code) or formal memorandums of understanding from all agencies that participate in the informal "Hoarding Task Force" process. As it is now, when staff with institutionalized knowledge retire or leave the City, their knowledge goes with them and there is nothing in place to guide new staff.
City of Falls Church, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased coordination. Unrealistic to think we will go beyond that given size of jurisdiction and number of cases.
City of Greenbelt, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a task force.
City of Manassas, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If hoarding does start to become a regular problem in this jurisdiction then it would be beneficial to have a task force of committed community organizations who would be available for hands on results instead of just decision makers. • A written agreement among multi-disciplines (i.e. fire marshal, zoning, churches, AAA, school) could be helpful but at this point, the referrals and cooperation is happening.
City of Rockville, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a coordinated effort and a task force to address this issue. It is very complex and long term. You need detection (training to identify), Intervention (trained professionals), Enforcement (laws, courts and law enforcement trained) follow up (as this takes very long to remedy)
District of Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel that Mental Health and Social Services should be educated and included in hoarding cases. Involve more mental health outreach workers who can connect hoarders to mental health case managers who can work with the client to help them reduce the clutter and establish a safe home. • Since (many of) these are cases caused by the mentally challenged and/or senility, I would like to work together with competent officials who can have a legal authority over these citizens. Then we can go on and rescue the animals and have the household members receive medical assistance. • More interagency involvement and partnership. • We need a formal policy or a legal remedy. • Search warrants, law, or code to allow for fines and confiscation of property.
Fairfax City, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code enforcement could be more forceful.

Fairfax County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thus far, we have been very successful, but better coordination is needed, especially with mental health assistance. • There have been several news articles, but the public's awareness needs to be raised as this is a relatively prevalent problem, and a serious one. I have probably dealt with about 75 to 100 of these cases in my career. All have similarities, but each is unique. Additional training is needed for code enforcement personnel in dealing with these cases. Several years ago, Fairfax County hosted a one-day seminar on this topic. They felt it would be a success if 30 people came. Actual attendance was over 300, including code enforcement, mental health and a large number of relatives of hoarders who were looking for clues as to how to address the issue for a family member. • We are ahead of the program in operations and logistics. I think funding of these cases is the big challenge to overcome. • There needs to be legislative authority to combine the responsibilities of housing enforcement into one department or agency. A commitment to intervention by the jurisdiction is a must along with staff and budget. Legal definitions need to be enhanced to recognize behavior that affects the safety of neighbors or public well being. • Due process is paramount when pursuing enforcement. Education of the judiciary is equally important. Personal protection of those vested with investigatory power and classes on constitutional law are also important. Dissemination of lessons learned is of great value to the peripheral agencies. Learning what hoarding is and is not is needed not only for the jurisdictional authorities but the public. • We continue to discuss cases to identify new agencies that should be involved with cases and new ways to address the problem. In 2004 this resulted in Animal Control Services becoming involved with the Task Force and then becoming the fourth agency considered a Primary Responder.
Frederick County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe the condition of most homes are uninhabitable and more direct involvement from the Health Department would assist in forcing person(s) to address the problem prior to it reaching the magnitude it does. Vets within our community are probably aware of persons who house more animals than appropriate, however do not, or will not report cases even though they have a direct impact on the health of the animal. • With respect to laws, requiring Health Departments, government in general, city, county, state and/or federal agencies to report cases of hoarding, as well as Veterinarians, would help in earlier detection which makes these cases more manageable. • The establishment of a task force would be a good beginning. The task force could then be recommended to local supervisors ways the codes could be strengthened to address the behaviors.

Loudoun County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been interested in exploring the need for and possibly putting together a task force in Loudoun for some time now. Having the time and resources to do so is another issue. • Provisions for staff time and the financial resources to put together a task force and maintain one would be needed. The last thing that we need is to have another mandate without money to carry out the responsibilities.
Montgomery County, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we had a behavioral health court we could possibly use that to leverage the individual to get mental health treatment instead of just moving the problem from one residence to another or making them homeless if they fail to comply with our county codes. • County needs to set up a central database for complaints so we can all access any records of complaints from other agencies for a specified address. There should be a coordinator for all hoarding cases. • We could use easier methods to obtain a search warrant to gain access to homes that are posing a serious life safety or health risk to the occupants. Need more coordination and cooperation with other agencies. We also need more education for the public and the people involved with handling these hoarding cases. • The Task Force is a step in the right direction.
Prince William County, VA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training is needed in understanding a person that is a hoarder. • Training /education on why a person hoards. Have a good working relationship with multi-agency's prior to a hoarding case. Have a call list available for the case worker.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our analysis, the following recommendations are presented on how the Washington metropolitan region can best address the hoarding problem. As hoarding is a multi-faceted issue requiring multi-faceted responses, effective interventions require a community-coordinated response.

A coordinated response allows for a more effective and comprehensive response to hoarding in a jurisdiction. Hoarding is a complex and multifaceted behavioral problem that may make itself known in a number of different ways. Hoarders may express themselves by hoarding objects or animals. Hoarders themselves may be young or elderly. Hoarding homes may exhibit a range from simple clutter to ones that require a HAZMAT response. Therefore, in order for a jurisdiction to effectively deal with this issue,

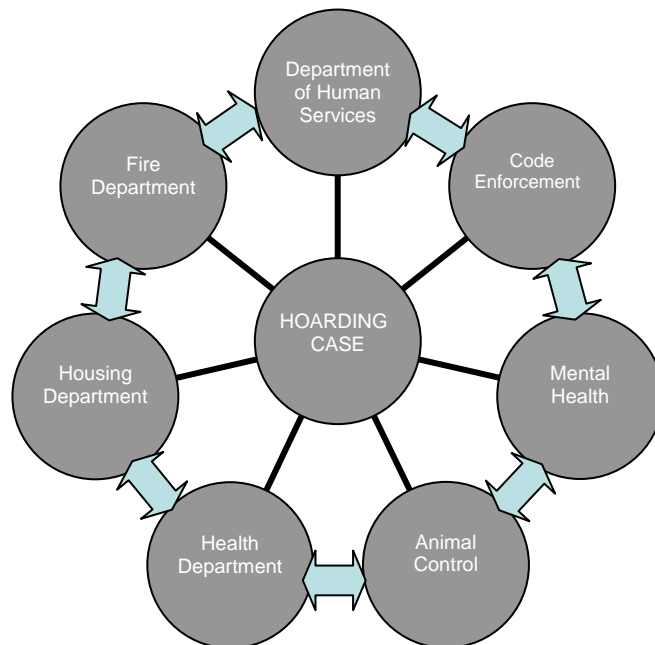
all of the agencies that may either discover, intervene or treat hoarders must coordinate their response.

A coordinated response, however, will likely vary depending on the size of the jurisdiction and the likely number of hoarding cases they may respond to over time. Coordinated responses may range from hoarding related agencies sharing information via phone or e-mail as they arise, coordinating a response through a lead agency, or by forming a Hoarding Task Force that meets on a regular basis. Education and training regarding the multi-modal aspects of hoarders and hoarding behavior for all government agencies involved in a coordinated response is also an important consideration. Cost savings can result from a lack of duplication of resources. In addition, a coordinated response allows greater ongoing information sharing that increases the chances that hoarders may be identified earlier, potentially lowering health and public safety impacts, as well as helping to decrease the potential for recidivism behaviors among known hoarders.

Implementation Strategy: Enact a Coordinated Response to Hoarding

Following are a set of recommendations that will assist local governments in the implementation of a coordinated response to hoarding. These recommendations are presented as a series of ascending levels of coordinated response from a basic level of coordination to a high level of coordination (Table 8). The three recommended levels of coordination are:

- **Recommendation Level 1:**
Chief Administrative Officers (CAO's) should identify which agencies are likely to deal directly with hoarding cases to ensure that those agencies coordinate their responses to specific hoarding situations and share basic hoarding information. This recommendation is most appropriate for small jurisdictions with only a few hoarding cases per year (less than five).



- **Recommendation Level 2:** If a hoarding task force or committee does not exist, a lead agency (or agencies) should be designated. This recommendation is most appropriate for jurisdictions who handle hoarding cases regularly but at a low to modest level (less than fifteen).
- **Recommendation Level 3:** Enact a coordinated response to hoarding by creating a Task Force comprised of relevant departments dealing with this issue. This policy would be appropriate for any jurisdiction that deals with a medium to high number of hoarding cases annually (greater than twenty).

TABLE 8: LEVELS OF HOARDING RESPONSE COORDINATION

<i>Recommendation Level 1:</i>	<i>Recommendation Level 2:</i>	<i>Recommendation Level 3:</i>
<p>CAO's should identify which agencies are likely to deal directly with hoarding cases to ensure that those agencies coordinate their responses to specific hoarding situations and share basic hoarding information.</p>	<p>If a hoarding task force or committee does not exist, a lead agency (or agencies) should be designated.</p>	<p>Enact a coordinated response to hoarding by creating a Task Force comprised of relevant departments dealing with this issue.</p>
<p>1. A coordinated response at the local level will help prevent a duplication of resources when multiple agencies respond. A coordinated response will help to use precious local government resources more wisely and effectively. However, simple information sharing may not significantly affect available resources.</p>	<p>1. A local coordinated response will prove to be a more cost effective method of response to hoarding. A lead agency may help to streamline the hoarding response and mitigate duplication of resources.</p>	<p>1. Enact a coordinated response to hoarding by creating a Task Force comprised of relevant departments dealing with this issue. Through coalition building, interdisciplinary training, advocacy and resource development, a hoarding task force will address the complex behavioral disorder of hoarding and develop practical tools and resources for community service providers.</p>
<p>2. If a hoarding task force or committee does not exist, at a minimum, CAO's should identify which agencies are likely to deal directly with hoarding cases to ensure that those agencies coordinate their responses to specific hoarding situations and</p>	<p>2. If a hoarding task force or committee does not exist, a lead agency (or agencies) should be designated. This will help ensure more coordination between agencies regarding hoarding cases and to ensure that resources are not being</p>	<p>2. A Task Force may be the most effective in cost savings from a response to hoarding. Hoarding is a multi-modal problem encompassing public safety, health, aging and mental health issues. A coordinated response at the local level will help</p>

share basic hoarding information.	duplicated or used unnecessarily on specific hoarding cases.	prevent a duplication of resources when multiple agencies respond. A coordinated response will help to use precious local government resources more wisely and effectively.
3. As cases arise, information that does not violate privacy or HIPPA laws should be shared between agencies. Privacy rights must be upheld in any new laws enacted. Any sharing of case information will need to meet state regulations.	3. Lead agencies should take referrals from other agencies regarding hoarding cases as they arise.	3. A Hoarding Task Force will raise awareness of the complexities of hoarding behavior while developing practical tools to improve case management skills.
4. Basic information sharing could be done as simply with e-mails or through more detailed monthly reports.	4. Turf issues may hamper cross-departmental cooperation and coordination. Leadership from elected officials or CAO's will be important to ensure successful cooperation. The lead agency must be given a basic amount of decision making authority to ensure success.	4. Task Force members should come from various backgrounds and organizations, including housing, legal, psychology, health, animal control, and social service. The Task Force will typically meet on monthly basis to discuss three main areas of interest: assessment of risk, development of intervention protocols, and education. ¹
5. If a hoarding task force or committee does not exist, at a minimum, CAO's should identify which agencies are likely to deal directly with hoarding cases to ensure those agencies share basic hoarding information.	5. Privacy rights must be upheld in any local government interventions with hoarders. A lead agency may help ensure these rights are upheld.	5. Turf issues may hamper cross-departmental cooperation and coordination on a task force. Leadership from elected officials or CAO's will be important to ensure successful task force operations.
6. As cases arise, information that does not violate privacy or HIPPA laws should be shared between agencies. Privacy rights must be upheld in any new laws	6. Preliminary evidence supports the idea that a coordinated response by a jurisdiction will produce favorable results in any response to hoarding. Hoarding is a multi-modal	6. Privacy rights must be upheld in any local government interventions with hoarders. A hoarding task force may help ensure these rights are upheld.

<p>enacted. Any sharing of case information will need to meet state regulations.</p>	<p>problem encompassing public safety, health, aging and mental health issues. A coordinated response at the local level will help prevent a duplication of resources when multiple agencies respond. A coordinated response will help to use precious local government resources more wisely and effectively.</p>	
<p>7. Information sharing among various local government departments will likely be extremely valuable, helping each department respond to specific hoarders appropriately and more effectively.</p>	<p>7. Information sharing among various local government departments will likely be extremely valuable, helping each department respond to specific hoarders appropriately and more effectively.</p>	<p>7. Information sharing among various local government departments will likely be extremely valuable, helping each department respond to specific hoarders appropriately and more effectively.</p>
<p>8. It is likely that gaps in the knowledge and awareness of the hoarding issue may prevent some jurisdictions from effectively addressing this issue. Except for the most egregious cases, people may not recognize all cases of hoarding. Also, some departments such as mental health or human services may understand the psychological or social issues but may not be sufficiently aware of the public safety or health implications. The reverse may be true for public safety personnel. Information sharing among public agencies on hoarding will increase a jurisdiction's effectiveness of response. Education and training for relevant agencies about hoarders and hoarding behavior will also be an important component.</p>	<p>8. Proper awareness and knowledge of hoarding may help reduce costs in the long run by increasing opportunities for earlier intervention when hoarders are discovered. Greater awareness and appreciation of the issue may serve as a catalyst to allow greater resources to be brought to bear on this issue. Education and training for relevant agencies about hoarders and hoarding behavior will also be an important component.</p>	<p>8. Proper awareness and knowledge of hoarding may help reduce costs in the long run by increasing opportunities for earlier intervention when hoarders are discovered. Greater awareness and appreciation of the issue may serve as a catalyst to allow greater resources to be brought to bear on this issue. A task force may be the most optimal vehicle for knowledge and information sharing. Education and training for relevant agencies about hoarders and hoarding behavior will also be an important component.</p>

Typical agencies that may intervene with hoarders and may participate on a task force:

- **Health Department**, typically the lead agency, has the responsibility of enforcing the property maintenance provisions of Uniform Statewide Building Codes which establishes housing standards and conditions. The Health Department also typically has the authority to declare a property unfit for occupancy.
- **Social Services and Child Protective Services** provides social workers to interview and assess the needs and/or risks of any children and adults living in a hoarding environment. They are also a frontline to the many programs available to those individuals in need.
- **Animal Services Division** provides the expertise to ensure an animal's welfare in animal hoarding cases or when a pet is living in a hoarding condition.
- **Fire and Rescue Department** has the responsibility of enforcing the fire prevention code which grants fire marshals the authority to evacuate an unsafe structure, take actions to help bring compliance, and take the necessary actions to ensure the safety of the public and emergency response personnel.
- **Department of Housing and Community Development** offers programs that help owners bring blighted structures into compliance.
- **Mental Health Services** provides on- and off-site mental health evaluations and recommendations.
- **Adult Protective Services/Elder Services** is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities and recommends and coordinates resources for elders to help them to remain as independent as possible.
- **Department of Planning and Zoning** works with property owners to help them meet the requirements of the state/county zoning ordinance.
- **Police Department** is sometimes the first responder and may provide referrals to other agencies for investigation and intervention.
- **Department of Public Works and Environmental Services** provides on-site engineering and building code knowledge in order to assess a structure's condition and can provide immediate action when removing the accumulation of waste and debris.¹²

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- ¹¹Fairfax County Government, Fairfax County Hoarding Task Force, retrieved March 10, 2006, http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/trash/hoarding/tf_general.htm.
- ¹² Adapted from Fairfax County Government, Fairfax County Hoarding Task Force, retrieved March 10, 2006, http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/trash/hoarding/tf_general.htm.

APPENDIX

Institute for Regional Excellence Hoarding Project Online Survey

When individuals exhibit the behavior of hoarding of objects and animals, it can be significant problem. This behavior not only impacts the hoarder and their family and/or neighborhood, but it is an increasing problem for local governments. Government agencies are currently struggling with how to investigate and intervene in these situations and how to effectively coordinate a response from multiple agencies. A COG workgroup is investigating and defining the issue of hoarding from a mental health and public safety perspective and is conducting this survey to identify how local governments in the D.C. metropolitan area are approaching the issue.

Your help in answering these questions will assist the COG workgroup in gathering needed information. Please respond to the following questions pertaining to your jurisdiction's involvement with and response to hoarders in your community. Your time spent in completing this survey is greatly appreciated. Please fill out this survey and, when complete, hit the SUBMIT button at the bottom of the form.

If you have any questions about this form or the project, please contact MWCOC staff person Rick Leon at 202-962-3341 or rleon@mwccog.org.

Please enter the following information:

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Phone:

E-mail:

May we contact you with any follow-up questions? Yes No

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible. Enter as much text as you would like in the survey form.

1. How aware are you of the hoarding issue?
2. How prevalent is hoarding in your jurisdiction?
3. How many times has your agency responded to this issue over the past year?
4. What types or forms of hoarding have you encountered? Is one type more prevalent than another (objects vs. animals, etc.) in your jurisdiction?

5. Does your jurisdiction have an official definition of hoarding? If so, please insert your official definition below or send as a separate attachment to: rleon@mwcog.org.

6. Has there been any data collected on hoarding in your jurisdiction?

Yes No

If so, please list a contact person, phone number and e-mail so we may access this data if possible.

7. What problems or obstacles have you encountered in addressing hoarding in your jurisdiction?

8. When a hoarding situation is identified, what is the normal course of action or response in your jurisdiction?

9. Does your jurisdiction have formal policy or procedure when responding to hoarding situations, such as a task force or a lead agency?

Yes No

If you have a task force or formal method of response, please describe below.

10. If your jurisdiction does have a hoarding task force, please describe the event(s) that lead to its formation.

11. Based on what your jurisdiction is currently doing about hoarding, what do you feel should or could be done differently?

12. Do you have any recommendations on ways to improve the response to hoarding (e.g. new policies, procedures, coordination, regulations, laws)?

13. Is there a central point of contact for hoarding issues in your jurisdiction? If so, please identify the appropriate contact person's name, title, phone and e-mail.

Please submit this form by February 21, 2006. Thank you for your time and effort.

HOARDING SURVEY LIST

The Regional Hoarding Survey attempted to obtain the largest possible response from a wide range of local government agencies. Mailing lists from various COG committees were compiled to make up the survey contact list:

- Regional Adult Services / APS Coordinators
- Regional Mental Health Agencies
- COG Animal Services Committee
- COG Fire Chiefs Committee
- COG Housing Directors Committee
- COG Health Officers Committee
- COG Metropolitan Development Policy Committee
- COG Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee
- COG Police Chiefs Committee
- COG Chief Administrative Officers Committee

NATIONAL CAPITOL REGION LOCAL GOVERNMENT HOARDING CONTACTS

Arlington County, VA

- Tom Polera, Captain
Assistant Fire Marshall - Investigations
Arlington County Fire Marshall's Office
703.228.4641
tpoler@arlingtonva.us
- Henriette Kellum
DHS/APS
(703) 228-1753
- Richard Freeman
CHPD/Code Enforcement
(703) 228-4209

City of Alexandria, VA

- Deborah Warren, LCSW, DCSW
Division Director Child, Family & Prevention Services
703 838-6400 x166
deborah.warren@alexandriava.gov

City of Falls Church, VA

- Pam Doran
Acting Director, Housing and Community Services
City of Falls Church
703-248-5123
pdoran@fallschurchva.gov

City of Greenbelt, MD

- Dr. Elizabeth Park, Executive Director, Greenbelt CARES
301 345-6660

City of Manassas, VA

- Brian Smith
Fire Marshal
703/257-8231
bsmith@ci.manassas.va.us
- Joan Strawderman
Chief Animal Control Officer
Manassas City Animal Control Services
703/257-8101
jstrawderman@ci.manassas.va.us

District of Columbia

- Adam Parascandola,
The Washington Humane Society,
202-723-5730
adam.p@washhumane.org
- Maria Hille
Program Manager
Animal Disease Prevention Division
Animal Control
202-535-1952
maria.hille@dc.gov
- Richard Fleming
Fire Marshal
441 4th Street NW # 370 Washington, DC 20001
202-727-3659
richard.fleming@dc.gov

Fairfax City, VA

- Joyce Holden
Animal Control Officer
Animal Control, City of Fairfax
703-385-7924
jholden@fairfaxva.gov

Fairfax County, VA

- Fairfax County Hoarding Task Force
703-246-2300
TTY 703-591-6435
rhtf@fairfaxcounty.go
- John Yetman, EHS II
Chairman Fairfax County Hoarding Task Force
Fairfax County Health Department
703-246-8421
John.Yetman@FairfaxCounty.gov
- Douglas Emerson
Fire Marshal's Office
Douglas.Emerson@FairfaxCounty.gov
- Andre Sanderson
Fairfax County Police - Animal Services Division
Andrew.Sanderson@FairfaxCounty.gov

Frederick County, MD

- Harold L. Domer, Jr.
Director
Frederick County Animal Control Division
1832 Rosement Avenue
Frederick, Maryland 21702
hdomer@fredco-md.net

Montgomery County, MD

- Paul D. Hibler
Deputy Director
Montgomery County Police Animal Services Division
paul.hibler@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Officer Joan Logan
Crisis Intervention Team Coordinator
Montgomery County Department of Police
240-773-5057
joan.logan@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Linda Bird
Manager
Department of Housing and Community Affairs
240-777-3671
Linda.bird@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Wendy Turner, LCSW-C
Supervisory Therapist
Montgomery County Crisis Center
240-777-1479
wendy.turner@montgomerycountymd.gov

Prince William County, VA

- Linda Kauffman
Sergeant
Prince William County Animal Control
703-792-5371
lkauffman@pwcgov.org
- Adult Protective Services 703-792-7500
- Department of Mental Health 703-792-7700

ARLINGTON COUNTY
HOARDING TASK FORCE*

*The Arlington County Hoarding Task Force has kindly provided examples of materials related to their operation.

CHARTER FOR HOARDING TASK FORCE

September 2002 (revised March 2006)

PURPOSE. The Hoarding Task Force is an ongoing interagency team whose mission is to coordinate all County action related to severe hoarding cases in Arlington County. The Task Force must balance the rights of the individuals against the safety of the community in developing strategies to deal with hoarding cases and ensure consistency in approaches among all entities involved in these cases.

SCOPE. The Task Force shall carry out the following functions:

1. Develop and maintain a procedure for dealing with moderate to severe hoarding that assertively uses the various County codes to deal with properties which, because of hoarding behavior or occupants, are in violation of codes. The procedure should detail steps, decision points, criteria, responsibilities among agencies, communication and coordination mechanisms, and timing. The procedures should represent the agreement of all members of the Task Force and shall be forwarded to agency directors for approval. The Task Force may recommend changes to the procedure at any time.
2. Develop approaches or procedures for managing hoarding cases after initial intervention in order to monitor recurrence of conditions and take appropriate steps when warranted and feasible.
3. Address and recommend solutions to related issues and concerns, such as how to obtain initial evidence to obtain an affidavit and securing a warrant, and how to clean up properties for which owners will not take action to clean up.
4. Recommend approaches to training and education, including target audiences, format, and timing. Include recommendations for outreach and education to the general public to build community awareness of the problem.
5. Recommend to the appropriate agency directors resources needed to carry out its functions.
6. Assess membership and participation of participating agencies and recommend changes when needed.

CHARTERING GROUP AND AUTHORITY. The Task Force is chartered by the directors of the departments or agencies that are members of the Task Force. As new departments and agencies are added, the director of that agency is added to the chartering group. The Task Force provides advice and recommendations to the department/agency directors, who have the authority to commit resources, make decisions, and carry out actions or activities. The Task Force has no independent authority as a group. Individual members of the Task Force, who may have authority to take actions under code or law, retain their independent authority. Representatives on the Task Force have the obligation to report back to their agency heads, as well as the obligation to ensure maximum effectiveness of the Task Force as a working team.

MEMBERSHIP. The following agencies are members of the Hoarding Task Force and are expected to name one or more staff persons representing appropriate programs or functions:

- Department of Human Services:
- Aging and Disability Services Division, Adult Protective Services
- Fire Department, Office of the Fire Marshal
- Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, Code Enforcement

PARTNERS AND RESOURCE AGENCIES. The following agencies interact with Task Force members on joint cases and are invited to meetings as applicable cases or hoarding issues are discussed:

- Animal Welfare League, Animal Warden
- County Attorney's Office
- Commonwealth Attorney's Office
- Magistrate's Office
- Police Department
- Department of Human Services:
- Aging and Disability Services Division, Senior Adult Mental Health Services
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division, Emergency Mental Health
- Public Health Division, Environmental Health Bureau
- Aging and Disability Services Division, Chronic Disease Program

Other entities may be added to the Task Force, with the concurrence of the department heads of sitting members.

Representing ongoing functional areas, members shall not serve set terms. At the end of each fiscal year, however, department heads shall be asked to reaffirm representation by each staff person on the Task Force for the next fiscal year. If there are issues with a particular representative (e.g., attendance, cooperation, understanding of purpose of Task Force), these shall be noted to the department head.

CHAIR OF TASK FORCE. The Department of Human Services (DHS) Director will appoint a chairperson for the Task Force from DHS staff. The Chair shall assess members' participation and ask department heads to reaffirm representation by the end of each fiscal year.

DURATION. The Task Force is an ongoing group with responsibility to provide advice and recommendations on hoarding cases as they arise. The charter of the Task Force

shall be reviewed annually by the directors of the member agencies, who may decide to discontinue the Task Force or modify its charter at any time. The Task Force also may recommend changes to the charter to the directors of the member agencies.

MEETINGS/TIME COMMITMENTS. The Task Force shall meet as needed to deal with known or potential hoarding cases. The Chair of the Task Force shall convene meetings. Each member shall bring to the attention of the Chair potential cases and may suggest the convening of a meeting. The Task Force may opt to set a regular schedule of meeting times, with the option of canceling a specific meeting if there is not sufficient cause to have a meeting.

The Task Force may need to meet more frequently when the need arises for special tasks or projects. The Task Force may establish committees or ad hoc groups to undertake ongoing Task Force functions or special tasks.

REPORTING. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the Task Force shall establish a draft work plan for the upcoming year, which lists general tasks to be accomplished, approximate time frames for accomplishing each task, and points at which the Task Force shall report to the chartering agency directors. The Task Force shall submit the draft work plan to the chartering agency directors for approval.

GROUND RULES. The Task Force shall establish ground rules for operation of the Task Force, which shall include the following as a minimum:

- The Principles of Government Service shall be the driving force in discussion and recommendations.
- Decisions shall be by consensus if possible. Consensus means that after full discussion, all members of the group can accept and support the decision even if the action is not their first choice. If consensus is not possible, the Task Force may revert to a majority vote. The Task Force shall note occasions when the decision is derived by a majority vote.
- Task Force member representatives are responsible for information gathering from, and communication back to, their respective agencies.
- The Task Force shall decide whether and how notes of each meeting shall be taken and whether a summary shall be distributed following the meeting. The Task Force shall ensure that important decisions/recommendations are documented in written form.
- Generally, the content of discussions shall be documented without attribution to specific Task Force members, except where the position and authority of the member is critical to the subject of the discussion.
- Confidential case information will be discussed only in the presence of appointed Task Force members, the exception being case presenters approved by the Chair.



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Director's Office

3033 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 700A Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703-228-1790 FAX 703-228-1146 dhs@arlingtonva.us

MEMORANDUM

Susan Bell, Director
Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development

Susanne Eisner, Acting Director
Department of Human Services

TO: Jim Schwartz, Chief
Fire Department

FROM: Hoarding Task Force DATE: March 10, 2006

SUBJECT: Approval to revisions to the Hoarding Task Force Charter and the
establishment of Hoarding Task Force Case Management Procedures

Since the Hoarding Task Force was chartered four years ago the membership and practices have evolved. Currently, the regular attendees of the monthly meetings are representatives from the Fire Department's Office of the Fire Marshal; the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development's Code Enforcement; and the Department of Human Services' Aging and Disability Services Division's Adult Protective Services as well as the Director's Office. These members discuss and debrief cases, develop and implement case management procedures, identify and strategize on issues encountered and develop and provide training. Current members are engaged and welcome this opportunity to share observations and fine tune techniques for managing joint cases.

The attached revisions to the charter include clarification of the Hoarding Task Force membership to more accurately reflect the current practices.

The Task Force has also completed the development of a Case Management Procedure that reflects their research and experience with how to approach moderate to severe hoarding cases in Arlington.

Please review the attached documents and indicate your approval to adopt both the revised Charter and Case Management Procedure by signing below. Your departmental Task Force representative will be scheduling a meeting with you within the next two weeks to review the documents. After all approvals have been obtained, the Hoarding Task Force will begin to notify all relevant internal and external agencies on the Hoarding Task Force Case Management Procedures.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration and review of these important documents.

Approved:

Susan Bell, Director
Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development

Date

Susanne Eisner, Acting Director
Department of Human Services

Date

James Schwartz, Chief
Fire Department

Date

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA HOARDING TASK FORCE

Case Management Procedure (v. March 10, 2006)

POLICY STATEMENT

This procedure was originally developed by the Arlington Hoarding Task Force in April 2003. It is intended to formalize a collaborative and consistent case management approach for use by County staff managing moderate-to-severe hoarding cases as required by the Task Force's Charter.

BACKGROUND

Hoarding behavior is defined as "the acquisition of and failure to discard things that are useless or of no value, living spaces cluttered enough to prevent the activity that the space was designed for and sufficient distress or impairment in functioning (may include impending eviction, financial hardship due to excessive buying, risk of removal of children by authorities) caused by the hoarding." (Frost and Hartl)

The primary goals of hoarding case management are risk reduction to the client and the community and assuring compliance with the appropriate building and property codes.

Prior to using this procedure, County staff should be properly trained on hoarding issues and understand the importance of working in consultation with the appropriate departmental managers, supervisors and direct service staff. Supervisors are expected to review this procedure with new employees who will be involved in interdepartmental hoarding efforts.

STEP 1:

Referrals (See Attachment 1 - Referral Criteria) - Community referrals are received and processed based on each department's criteria and timeframes. Entry points for referrals are most commonly received by the following departments/programs: DHS/APS, CPHD/Code Enforcement and the ACFD/Fire Marshal's Office. Animal Welfare League or DHS/Emergency Mental Health may also receive referrals. When this occurs, referrals should be redirected to one of the three primary entry points, although staff should respond to an emergency or remain involved in a collaborative manner.

STEP 2:

Telephone Screening (See Attachment 2 - Assessment Tool) – Telephone screenings will be conducted with the referral source within 3 working days by a representative of the department in receipt of the initial referral. The

screeener will obtain as much information as possible to determine the following: 1) the level of risk to the client and the community, 2) what problems exist in addition to hoarding (for example, are the utilities operating, does the resident appear ill or confused), 3) which departmental representatives should be included in the initial home visit, and 4) the initial severity for hoarding behavior (See Attachment 3 – Severity Ratings). Information gathered on the optional screening tool is considered confidential and only shared with staff on a “need to know” basis. Information gathered for the screening can include:

- Name and phone number of person making referral (remains confidential to program receiving referral)
- Date of referral
- Name of client
- Address of client
- Phone number
- DOB of client
- Family and other supports (names, addresses and phone numbers)
- Other County programs or private agencies involved
- Physical or Mental Health problems of client
- Are basic needs being met, such as food and shelter?
- Client’s attitude towards hoarding and county referral
- Description of the environment: Is there human or animal waste, rodents or insects, rotting food, are utilities operational, are there problems with blocked exits, are there combustibles, etc.?
- Are there other people residing in the house?
- Are there animals in the house (dead or alive)?
- Is the person willing to allow access?
- Are there other problems in addition to hoarding?
- Is there knowledge of recent known emergencies at this location?
- Is there knowledge of weapons in the home?

STEP 3:

Initial Assessment/Investigation - The initial assessment will be conducted by a team of departmental representatives from DHS (as designated by DHS//Adult Protective Services) and, either, CPHD/Code Enforcement or ACFD/Fire Marshal’s Office. This assessment will be conducted within five working days from the telephone screening. There may be unique occasions, based on the findings of the phone screening coupled with lack of availability of staff, when the home visit may be conducted by one team member. In these situations, the team member will notify their supervisor prior to the visit. Directly following the visit, team members will be apprised of site findings to ensure coordination of efforts.

The team will gather appropriate data, using one of a variety of comprehensive assessment tools during the initial home visit.

The assessment tool should include: 1) assessing client capacity (may be done jointly with mental health), 2) assessing risk to the client, 3) rating the hoarding conditions in the environment, 4) assessing social supports, 5) assessing clients' insight/willingness to accept services and receptivity to clean-up assistance, 6) assessing clients' financial status and clients' ability/willingness to pay for services, 7) assessing clients' physical appearance to determine need for medical and/or nurse assessments, and 8) assessing clients' other needs, such as food and shelter, 9) assessing the life safety risk to the adjacent neighboring properties as a result of the subjects hoarding.

Note: If the team is unable to gain entry into the residence because the resident is refusing, the Fire Marshal representative will begin procedures for obtaining a Fire Inspection Warrant (see Attachment 4).

STEP 4:

Coordinated Planning - Within 2 business days of the initial assessment, the Task Force's Response Team will discuss the case and if it is determined to be either a moderate or severe hoarding case, will decide which County staff need to be involved in the evolving case and will develop an Interdepartmental Intervention Plan that addresses all client safety concerns. DHS will manage the service delivery for the human services aspects of the case, while Code Enforcement and the Fire Marshal's Office will manage the specific compliance issues which involve the property. APS will be the first contact for occupant regarding heavy housekeeping resources. While the Response Team's coordinated efforts on such a case will be concluded when the property is in compliance, the occupant may continue to be linked to APS or other DHS programs. Each team member will document all intervention efforts in their respective agency/program records to ensure that there is a record of the Response Team's work.

STEP 5:

Ongoing Intervention Response – During regularly scheduled Task Force meetings, members will debrief recent scenarios. There will be a strict policy that during meetings where “confidential” scenarios are discussed, only Arlington County employees, involved County contractors and applicable State employees are allowed to attend. Task Force members must sign a confidentiality statement as not to discuss privacy information of subjects of hoarding outside of the Task Force meetings. This must be completed upon assignment to the Task Force and renewed annually. The Task Force reviews effectiveness and quality of the coordinated approach and makes recommendations for follow-up by the Response Team.

NOTES:

DHS/APS assists voluntary clients with securing temporary shelter to remove them from unsafe living conditions. If the client refuses to accept assistance and is mentally ill, the client may have to be removed from the unsafe environment through the enforcement of a mental health detention process. It is rare that persons who hoard meet involuntary detention criteria. Code Enforcement and ACFD/Fire Marshal's Office may immediately declare the property unfit for human habitation (assuming that they have been able to enter and assess) and, thereby, force an involuntary client out of an unsafe environment. If this happens and the client is willing to accept assistance or lacks mental capacity, DHS/APS will make every effort to intervene. (Competent clients may refuse Adult Protective Services.)

Barriers to Intervention – If the Task Force determines that intervention barriers exist that cannot be resolved by the Response Team, such as:

- clients' lacking insight or exhibiting denial, lack of motivation to change, mental illness or dementia;
- clients' refusing services; and/or
- staff's inability to secure a "right of entry" through the Fire Inspection warrant procedure; then, a representative from its membership will be designated to take the issue to a higher level (e.g., department heads, courts) depending upon the time sensitivity of the issue, for resolution.

ATTACHMENT 1: HOARDING REFERRAL CRITERIA

Staff of all departments are expected to respond to a hoarding referral for an initial assessment.

One or more of the following conditions should be present for the following departments to accept a referral for ongoing intervention:

DHS/Adult Protective Services

NOTE: Hoarding is a symptom of an underlying mental illness; however some persons who hoard have a high level of functioning in other areas of their lives.

Typically a person referred to APS would have hoarding and some of the following characteristics:

1. Animal hoarding/animal neglect/animal waste/unsanitary conditions due to animals
2. Human waste inside the residence or in the yard
3. Rotting food
4. Frail, disabled or elderly
5. Presence of dementia
6. Presence of psychosis, paranoia, OCD or other serious mental illness
7. Lack of social supports
8. Evidence of inability to function in other areas of life

Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention

Presence of dangerous, hazardous and unsafe conditions as defined by building, property maintenance and fire codes.

ATTACHMENT 2: SCREENING TOOL (Optional)

Telephone Screening:

Date referral received: _____ Date County initiated follow-up: _____

Worker Receiving call: _____ Department _____

Client name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Social Security Number - - _____ D.O.B. - - _____

Referral Source (may be omitted to preserve confidentiality) : _____
Phone: () - _____

Household members: _____

Pets/animals? _____ Own/Rent: _____

Family or other supports: (include names and phone numbers) _____

Other County Programs or private agencies involved: _____

Physical or Mental Health Problems of client: _____

Are basic needs being met (i.e. food/shelter)?

Clients' attitude towards hoarding _____ Will client allow access: _____

Description of Hoarding Problem: (presence of human or animal waste, rodents or insects, rotting food, are utilities operational, are there problems with blocked exits, is there an extraordinary amount of combustibles, are adjacent properties at risk, etc.)

Other Problems/Needs:

Initial Hoarding Severity Rating: Severe Moderate Mild

Others to Involve in Initial Assessment: _____

Initial Assessment (At Property):

Date:

Task Force Response Team Members and Phone numbers:

Final Hoarding Rating: Severe Moderate Mild

Environmental Assessment:

Fire Hazards: accumulations:

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Are adjacent properties at risk | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · human waste | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · animal waste | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · extraordinary amounts of combustible materials | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · smoke detectors | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · fire extinguishers | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · means of egress | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · emergency escape | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · other | | |

Safety Hazards:

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| · rodents infestation | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · insect infestation | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · Animals (dead, ill or large numbers) | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · rotting food | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · running water | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · water heating facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · heating equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| · interior surface condition | | |
| · walls | | |
| · ceilings | | |
| · floors | | |
| · windows | | |
| · doors | | |
| · other | | |

Client Assessment:

Mental health Issues: (Dementia, psychosis, OCD, other)

Frail/elderly or disabled:

Risks to client's health and safety:

Family and other social supports:

Client's insight/willingness to accept help:

Financial status/ability or willingness to pay for services:

Client's physical appearance

Client's other needs (food, shelter, medical)

Recommendations:

Fire:

Code:

DHS:

Date Presented to Task Force:

Follow-up plan with timeframes:

ATTACHMENT 3: HOARDING SEVERITY RATINGS

Severe – A severe rating is given when the following conditions exist: animal hoarding with widespread animal waste, including the presence of diseased or deceased animals; human waste within and around the residence; the presence of combustibles on and around the stove or furnace; hoarding so extreme that there are no even pathways for the resident(s) to walk from area to area (e.g., stairways blocked, entrances to rooms blocked, exits blocked, in general a “sea of debris”); sewer gas entering the home; rodents in the home, risk to neighbors/community due to extreme fire load; and lack of required utilities and facilities.

Moderate – A moderate rating is given when the following conditions exist: utilities are generally operative and the client can move about even if through narrow pathways, code and fire violations exist, most living surfaces are covered with items and are unusable for their intended purposes, and home requires professional heavy house cleaners and large dumpsters to clean up.

Mild – A mild rating is given when the following conditions exist: environment meets the standard definition of hoarding behavior, but conditions are sufficiently mild so that ordinary household assistance could clean the environment within a few days. Often, mild cases are ones where family members have intervened on a regular basis or the resident(s) has moved so frequently that the hoarding has not accumulated. In these cases, County intervention may be minimal or not required.

ATTACHMENT 4: WARRANT PROCEDURE AND FIRE INSPECTION WARRANT

In order to meet the requirements of the Fourth Amendment, the government must either have consent to search private property, or have obtained a warrant because there is probable cause to believe that an offense has been committed. It is highly recommended that "right of entry" be based on consent, where possible. This will preserve a better relationship with the subject involved. In addition, the magistrate is more likely to be willing to issue a warrant if other avenues have been exhausted. Where consent cannot be obtained, a warrant can be issued: (1) where facts and circumstances, (2) are within an official's knowledge, (3) of which he has reasonably trustworthy information, and (4) which are sufficient unto themselves to warrant a person of reasonable caution to believe that an offense has been or is being committed.

In addition to stating facts and circumstances that meet the standards of (1) through (4) above, an application for a warrant must identify the reported violation and the purpose of the inspection pertaining to the safety and habitability of the premises.

The local fire official can obtain a fire inspection warrant for inspections under section §27-98.1. (Inspections of buildings, structures, properties and premises) and §27-98.2. (Issuance of warrant). Fire inspection warrants for inspections or reinspection of buildings, structures, property, or premises subject to inspections pursuant to the Code, to determine compliance with regulations or standards set forth in the Code, shall be based upon a demonstration of probable cause and supported by affidavit.

No inspection warrant shall be issued pursuant to §27-98.1. and §27-98.2. except upon probable cause, supported by affidavit, particularly describing the place, thing or property to be inspected, examined or tested and the purpose for which the inspection, examination, testing or collection of samples for testing is to be made.

Probable cause shall be deemed to exist if such inspection, examination, testing or collection of samples for testing are necessary to ensure compliance with the Statewide Fire Prevention Code or adopted county Fire Code amendments for the protection of life and property from the hazards of fire or explosion.

The supporting affidavit shall contain either a statement that consent to inspect, examine, test or collect samples for testing has been sought and refused or facts or circumstances reasonably justifying the failure to seek such consent in order to enforce effectively the fire safety laws, regulations or standards of the Commonwealth which authorize such inspection, examination, testing or collection of samples for testing.

Attached hereto is a Fire Inspection affidavit that will be completed and provided to the Magistrate from the Fire Marshal representative to obtain a warrant. Members who have made contact with the subject other than the Fire Marshal should provide the Fire Marshal written information that is within their personal knowledge as to the facts and circumstances of the case to assist in showing probable cause that a violation of law exists. In addition, members of the Task Force providing this information should also include their resume establishing their knowledge, education, and experience.

The Fire Marshal representative that is writing the affidavit should include their information of the facts and a copy of their curriculum vitae when presenting their case to the magistrate. The affidavit should list the members of the Task Force as participants in the Fire Inspection.

When serving the Fire Inspection warrant contact should be made prior to provide ACPD with knowledge that a warrant is being served. A minimum of two armed Fire Marshals or Police Officers must be on the scene while serving the warrant. Body armor must be in place. The Fire Marshal shall notify the Emergency Communications Center prior to serving the warrant and again when the scene is secured.

When serving the warrant, Fire Marshals shall follow policy regarding “knock and announce” procedures. One last effort should continue to gain consent for entry if the subject is on the premises.

After entry is secured, the determination should be made if locks will be changed and if the subject will be removed. Occupant will be offered assistance in identifying shelter options. A notice of violation must accompany the documentary of the Fire Inspection warrant. If entry is made, the subject is not on the premises, and the decision is made to change the locks to deny entry for life safety concerns, the required posting must be performed on the entryway.

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA HOARDING TASK FORCE

Case Management Procedure Tool (v. February 24, 2006)

SEE FULL CASE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES DOCUMENT FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS

STEP	Action	Responsibility	Timing	Notes
1	<p>Referrals – all community referrals should be re-directed to DHS/APS, CPHD/Code Enforcement or Fire Department/Fire Marshal's Office to ensure effective coordination of subsequent steps</p> <p>Emergency assessment/intervention may still be required by emergency mental health staff in addition to re-direction to APS for hoarding concerns</p>	<p>All receiving community referrals, including Animal Welfare League, DHS/Emergency Mental Health, etc.</p>	Immediately upon receiving initial community referral	See Attachment 1 for Referral Criteria
2	<p>Telephone Screening – Obtain information to determine the following: 1) level of risk to client/community, 2) problems in addition to hoarding, 3) which departmental representatives should be included in the initial home visit, and 4) the initial severity for hoarding behavior. Information gathered is considered confidential and only shared with staff on a "need to know" basis.</p>	<p>APS, Code Enforcement or Fire Marshal's Office</p>	Within 3 business days from referral above	See Attachment 2 for optional Telephone Screening Assessment Tool and Attachment 3 for Severity Rating Definitions.
3	<p>Initial Assessment/Investigation – Gather data at home visit that assists in 1) assessing client capacity (may be done jointly with mental health), 2) assessing risk to the client, 3) rating the hoarding conditions in the environment, 4) assessing social supports, 5) assessing clients' insight/willingness to accept services and receptivity to clean-up assistance, 6) assessing clients' financial status and clients' ability/willingness to pay for services, 7) assessing clients' physical appearance to determine need for medical and/or nurse assessments, and 8) assessing clients' other needs, such as food and shelter. If the situation is deemed severe, contact Fire Marshal's Office and attempt to get consent for taking pictures on the spot in order to facilitate potential court actions later.</p>	<p>Task Force Response Team – including a DHS representative as designated by DHS/APS and at least one of either Code Enforcement or Fire Marshal's Office</p>	Within 5 business days from telephone screening above	See Attachment 4 for guidance on obtaining Fire Inspection Warrants.
4	<p>Coordinated Planning – Group determination of severity level of hoarding case, which County staff needs to be further involved, and development of an Interdepartmental Intervention Plan. APS will manage the service delivery for the human services aspects of the case, while Code enforcement and the Fire Marshal's Office will manage the specific compliance issues which involve the property. APS will be first contact for occupant regarding heavy housekeeping resources. While the Response Team's coordinated efforts on such a case will be concluded when the property is in compliance, the occupant may continue to be linked to APS or other DHS programs.</p>	<p>Task Force Response Team</p>	Within 2 business days from initial assessment above	
5	<p>Ongoing Intervention Response – Regular debriefings of scenarios and assessment of effectiveness of Task Force Response Team approaches.</p>	<p>Hoarding Task Force</p>	At monthly meetings	May result in request for direction from individual Department Director or Hoarding Task Force

STEP	Action	Responsibility	Timing	Notes
				member if significant barrier is identified

ATTACHMENT 6: TASK FORCE MEMBERS (MARCH 10, 2006)

Name	Department	Role
Malcolm Avant	CPHD/Code Enforcement	Member
Janette DeJesus	CPHD/Code Enforcement	Member
Patricia Durham	Human Services	Chair
Richard Freeman	CPHD/Code Enforcement	Member
Gary Greene	CPHD/Code Enforcement	Member
Keith Grierson	Fire Marshall	Member
Henriette Kellum	Human Services/APS	Member
Reginald Lesesne	Human Services/APS	Member
Capt. Tom Polera	Fire Marshall	Member
Donnie Thompson	Fire Marshall	Member