

Addressing the Health, Safety, and Tenancy Preservation Needs of Compulsive Hoarders

Responding to Compulsive Hoarding Among
MBHP Program Participants

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership's Model for Addressing Hoarding Issues

Our Goals:

1. To provide tenants with the support needed to maintain healthy, safe, and sanitary housing
2. To prevent loss of rental assistance subsidy
3. Eviction Prevention
4. Education of Staff and Partner Agencies

Section 8 Tools for Addressing Hoarding

- Annual Inspections of the unit
- Statement of Family Obligations
- Reasonable Accommodation Process
- Termination from Section 8 Program for non-compliance

Referral Comes In



Hoarding Team Receives Referral and Schedules Assessment (2 parts)



Home Visit

GOAL: To assess condition of the unit and tenant's insight into problem



Hoarding Team member accompanies inspector for re-inspection of unit



Office Visit

GOAL: To use CIR to assess tenant's insight when outside of unit



Case Management Process Begins

**Initial action plan is developed
using information from the
assessments and the tenant's input**

**Time and support are
given for voluntary
compliance**

**Voluntary
Compliance Track**

**Non-Compliance
Track**

Voluntary Compliance Track

Hoarding team meets to strategize about case management needs

Service Plan and Agreement signed by tenant to address hoarding issue

Case management/home visit; meet with professional organizer; seek treatment; regular check-ins with inspections on progress. *Tenant is given support and time.*

Compliance



Monitoring

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Non- Compliance

Non-Compliance Track

Case Conference when there is a refusal to cooperate and come into compliance



Hoarding case team meets to make recommendations to tenant and to give baseline requirements for compliance



Re-inspection of unit to assess any changes
(positive or negative)

Non-Compliance

**Possibility for move
to voluntary track**

Non-Compliance Track (cont.)

Continued Non-Compliance

TERMINATION FROM PROGRAM



Termination with No
Appeal Submitted



Appeal

Potential move to
voluntary track



Hearing



Reinstatement with
Conditions



If tenant continues non-compliance, termination

Our Referral Process: Field Staff

If our staff are in the field and encounter a hoarding situation:

- Photocopy the inspection report
- Write a detailed description of the hoarding situation including severity of hoarding, type of items, access to egress, etc (if there are animals involved, include type and number)
- Submit a referral to the hoarding team through the HCEC
- The hoarding team will work with staff to determine next steps once the assessment process is complete

Clutter Image Rating: Living Room

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



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

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Field Staff: When to refer

If field staff can place a unit on the image rating scale just shown at or above the #4, then make a referral to the hoarding team.

If we can get involved while the rating is low, we have the opportunity to intervene **before housing stability becomes an issue.**

Case Management Example

Name: “Angel”

Age: late 50s

Location: Suburb north of Boston

Apartment: 1 Bedroom, Multi-family building

Marital Status: Divorced

Family: Mother and daughter live in state

The Initial Home Visit

- ❑ Majority of unit not accessible
- ❑ No egress path
- ❑ No use of shower, limited access to bathroom sink
- ❑ No access to oven/stove
- ❑ Space on bed for sleeping



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The Action Plan

- ❑ Learning about categorization
- ❑ Building sorting skills
- ❑ Deciding what to do with items
- ❑ Sensitization to discarding/donation
- ❑ Understanding the emotional impact of clearing the egress paths
- ❑ Plan for minimizing or preventing re-cluttering

The Bathroom (initial visit)

- ❑ Doorway blocked by 2 ft wall of “stuff”
- ❑ Toilet only space accessible
- ❑ 5-6ft of items in bathtub
- ❑ Client had not used shower in 3 years



Bathroom Action Plan

- Divided the bathroom into manageable tasks
- Spent time during session focusing on **quality** of skill building rather than speed of work
- Increase amount of homework done by client between sessions

The Bathroom (After)



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Monitoring

After compliance, MBHP monitors clients for one year. We will slowly reduce the frequency of home visits as the client maintains their unit for longer periods of time in a safe manner. The reduction of home visits is based on the needs and comfort of the client and MBHP

MBHP is also available after the year of monitoring if the client needs assistance getting “back on track” or has concerns about re-cluttering.

Challenges

- Tenants will backslide and stall in their progress
- Cleanout and organizing costs
- Case management is time and resource intensive

What Works

- ❑ Early identification and intervention
- ❑ Post-compliance monitoring
- ❑ Staff and community education
- ❑ Building community and provider partnerships
- ❑ Working to understand why the “stuff” is important to the client
- ❑ Helping client to learn to set limits and self-monitor their hoarding
- ❑ Setting specific and realistic timeframes