



Hoarding – A Housing Public Health Concern

What is hoarding?

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition:

- Hoarding disorder is the persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.
- This difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and distress associated with discarding them.
- These symptoms result in the accumulation of possessions that clutter active living areas and substantially compromise their intended use.
- The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (including maintaining a safe environment for oneself and others).



What is the difference between hoarding and collecting?

- In hoarding, people seldom seek to display their possessions, which are usually kept in disarray.
- In collecting, people usually proudly display their collections and keep them well organized.

What kind of things do people hoard?

- common possessions, such as paper (e.g., mail, newspapers), books, clothing, and containers (e.g., boxes, paper, and plastic bags)
- garbage or rotten food
- animals or human waste products

What are the signs and symptoms of hoarding?

- Persistent inability to part with any possession, regardless of its value
- Excessive attachment to possessions Cluttered living spaces, making areas of the home unusable for the intended purpose Keeping stacks of newspapers, magazines, or junk mail
- Letting food or trash build up to unusually excessive, unsanitary levels
- Acquiring unneeded or seemingly useless items
- Difficulty managing daily activities because of procrastination and trouble making decisions Moving items from one pile to another, without discarding anything
- Difficulty organizing items, sometimes losing important items in the clutter
- Shame or embarrassment
- Limited or no social interactions

Why is hoarding a public health concern?

Public health concerns related to hoarding include the risk of:

- Eviction and homelessness
 - Homelessness can result if the local Department of Public Health must order the person out of or condemn the dwelling or if the landlord demonstrates in court that the level or type of hoarding seriously violates the lease. Shelters have also been known to bar individuals whose hoarding puts other shelter guests at risk.
- Health Problems
 - Health problems include falls or accidents and inability of emergency personnel to enter or remove an ill person. Clutter, garbage, animal or human feces and resulting mold or infestation can also cause respiratory and other health problems. Lack of sanitation can be particularly unsafe for immunocompromised individuals. Ammonia levels from accumulations of urine and feces can easily exceed maximum occupational exposure limits and can be harmful to persons with cardiac or respiratory dysfunction.
- Personal Safety
 - Blocked exits or heating vents can also pose a fire hazard and occasionally the nature or extent of hoarded items creates structural dangers due to excess weight. Hoarding of dangerous or flammable items poses great health and safety risks.
- Risk to Children and Adults
 - The Department of Children and Families can remove children from a home that poses serious health and safety risks to them. The Disabled Persons Protection Commission may also take action on behalf of a dependent family member with a disability.
- Animal Safety
 - Improper care or neglect of animals can put people at risk of committing felony-level crimes, resulting in forfeiture of animals, fines, and imprisonment.

Who needs to be involved?

1. Housing
2. Protective Services
3. Public Health and Safety/First Responders
4. Medical Team
5. Mental Health (clinicians trained in treating hoarding)
6. Legal/Criminal Justice
7. Clean-Up Services/Professional Organizers Trained in Hoarding
8. Case Management, Home Care, and Housing Support Service Provider for All Populations
9. Third-Party Payers
10. Self-Help Groups (Clutterers Anonymous, etc.)

How does Quincy Health Department respond to a hoarding case?

When a hoarding complaint is brought to the department, the primary role is to investigate the complaint using the following four-step process:

1. Gather information
2. Conduct an inspection
3. Document all inspection results
4. Proceed with enforcement procedures which might include:
 - Issuing a correction order
 - Determining fitness for human habitation
 - Convening hearings
 - Considering penalties, condemnation, orders to vacate or secure, or demolition

Quincy Resources

Hoarding / Clean-out Services:

Facility	Contact information	Notes
Bio-One Boston Hoarding	(774) 501-3464	Call for pricing
BioPro Boston	(978) 380-4075	Call for pricing
Green Team Junk Removal	(617) 420-5342	Call for pricing
Pro Junk Dispatch	(617) 433-2969	Call for pricing
The Junk-Luggers of Greater Boston	(844) 991-3677	Call for pricing
1-800-GOT JUNK	(800) 468-5865	Call for pricing

Hazmat / Biohazard Cleaning Services:

Facility	Contact information	Notes
Aftermath Biohazard Removal	(877) 692-7289	Call for pricing
Bio-One Boston	(774) 501-3464	Call for pricing
BioPro Boston	(978) 380-4075	Call for pricing
TRAUMA Services	(888) 648-7262	Call for pricing

Pest Control:

Facility	Contact information	Notes
Clancy Bros Pest Control	(617) 464-1305	Call for pricing
Ehrlich Pest Control	(866) 845-5382	Call for pricing
Ladybug Pest Control	(617) 745-0044	Call for pricing
Waltham Pest Services	(844) 387-9976	Call for pricing

More Resources and Links

<https://www.mass.gov/hoarding>

<https://www.masshousing.com/en/programs-outreach/community-services/housing-stability/hoarding>

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/hoarding-disorder/what-is-hoarding-disorder>

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