

# 2016 ONPHA Conference and Trade Show

## Hoarding: A holistic approach

**PRESENTED BY:** Megan Phillips, Integrated Hoarding Response Inc.;  
Richard Grotsch, Toronto Community Housing;  
Heather Brown, Toronto Cat Rescue

**Session #:** 606 - ONPHA

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# **Compulsive Hoarding**

Enhancing Your Understanding of a Complex Mental Health Issue

**PRESENTED BY:** Megan Phillips, Owner, Integrated Hoarding Response Inc.

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# What is Compulsive Hoarding?

- 3 Criteria for the establishment of a diagnosis of Compulsive Hoarding in accordance with the DSM-V:
  - 1) Accumulation of, and failure to discard, items that have limited or no value and failure to discard the excessive items.
  - 2) Excessive clutter precludes areas of the home from being used as intended or accessed.
  - 3) Distress or impairment as a result of hoarding behaviour.



# Acquiring Phase



- Often acquire excessively in the form of compulsive buying (usually considered an impulse control disorder) and acquiring free things.
  - May be associated with intense excitement and positive feelings (creates positive reinforcement).
  - May be used to sooth negative moods.
  - May attribute special meaning to their possessions (“good deals”, “opportunity”, “old friend”, “pretty”, “retail therapy”, “a gift for...”).





There is  
always a  
plan, an  
intention or  
an idea...



# Failure to Discard

- ◎ Congestion is so severe that it prevents or seriously limits the use of living spaces
- ◎ Hoarders attribute sentimental (emotional), instrumental (useful), or intrinsic (aesthetic) value *in excess* to their possessions.
- ◎ No different than average individuals however, hoarders extend this meaning to a wider variety of possessions and a larger quantity.



Which  
leads to  
conditions  
such as  
this....





Areas of  
home are  
inaccessible  
or cannot be  
used for  
intended  
purposes...



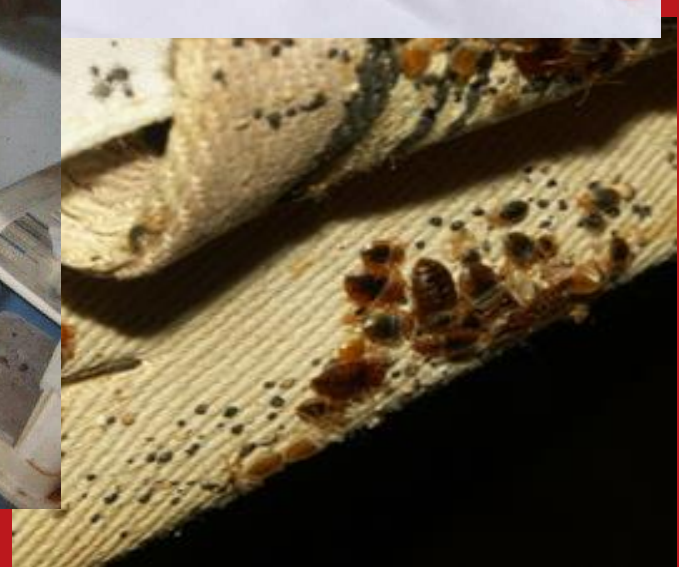
# Distress or Impairment

- An inability to maintain possessions can result in dangerous problems as it places individuals at risk for fire, falling, poor sanitation, and health problems.
- This distress easily leads to a sense of depression, overwhelm and hopelessness.
- An individual slowly ceases to function.





# The Consequences?





# What do these items truly represent?

- Thought process, hopes, dreams, aspirations, identity
- Unresolved grief
- “Just in case” thinking
- Past and future but a failure to live in the present
- Substitutions for loved ones
- Fear, anxiety, depression, overwhelm
- Acclimation and adjustment => denial
- Higher levels of creativity



# Generally Observed Behaviours

- Normal human reactions to abnormal situations but **magnified!**
- Common Defense mechanisms
  - Denial/Lying
  - Projection
  - Minimization
  - Rationalization
  - Emotional displacement or avoidance
  - Regression
  - Justification of behaviour
  - Defiance



# Other symptoms

- Hostility and/or paranoia
- ADHD 'type' behaviour
- Passive-Aggressive behaviour
- Perfectionism
- Emotionally over-reactive
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Manipulation
- Extreme thought patterns





So what do we do?



# Therapeutic Options

- Interruption and substitution of behaviours (learning new adaptive behaviours)
  - Re-acquaintance with previous healthy behaviours
  - Identification of, and interruption of, negative thoughts and thought patterns
  - Supporting reframes
  - Development of healthy coping skills
  - Instruction of life skills
  - Counselling and talk therapy
- 
- The goal is always increased self-awareness and self-efficacy



# Thank you!



Questions? Comments? Concerns?

Email Megan Phillips at [ihrhelp@rogers.com](mailto:ihrhelp@rogers.com)

or

call 519-671-1966

Integrated Hoarding Response Inc.

[www.ihrhelp.com](http://www.ihrhelp.com)



# Hoarding: a holistic approach

**PRESENTED BY:** Richard Grotsch, Toronto Community Housing  
**Session #:** 606 - ONPHA

# Our Communities:

- 58,500 units, 164,000 tenants
- Low to moderate- income families or single
- Diversity of cultural background and over 70 different languages
- 26,000 seniors, 6,500 over 80
- Varying ability, mental illness



# Our challenges:

- Funding, structure and resources
- Frustrated staff
- Varying rules and enforcement
- What is urgent and what is not? Where is the risk?
- Tensions in the system
  - We don't want to evict, but...
  - Supports aren't always available or accepted
  - Agencies are not always equipped to help





# Supporting Residents:

- 23 Community Service Coordinators (CSCs) work to connect residents to community support services
- Vulnerable Seniors Action Plan adopted
- Partnering with community partners to provide services in TCHC communities
- Consult and coordinate responses through City cross-sectoral situational tables (e.g., SPIDER, FOCUS Rexdale)





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# The Plan:

- Improve identification of problem units
- Develop follow-up tools for staff
- Training for front-line staff
- Building relationships with municipal enforcement and community partners



# Hoarding and other unit conditions

- “Excessive Clutter”
- Why are we concerned about excessive clutter?
- What about other unhealthy or unsafe unit conditions?





# Annual Unit Inspections:

Inspection tools

Categories:

- Clutter (none, minor, major)
- Fire code violations (combustibles/heat source, faulty wires, etc.)
- Human or animal waste
- Poor cleanliness
- Pests



# Clutter Image Rating Tool



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

## Clutter Image Rating

1 to 3 = NONE

4 to 6 = Minor

7 to 9 = Major



# Inspection Results:

Unit Number	Pest Infestation	Unit Mould	Unit Clutter	Unit Cleanliness	Balcony Clutter	Human/animal waste in unit (not in toilet/kitty litter)	4 ft wide path from unit/balcony doors to unit rooms	Flammable items near/on stove/space heater	Other fire hazards in unit (e.g. electrical BBQ)
2	None	None	Major	Fair	N/A	No	No	No	No
10	Minor	Minor	Major	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No
8	Major	Minor	Major	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No
7	Minor	Minor	Major	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No
421	None	None	Major	Poor	Major	No	No	No	No
520	None	None	Minor	Poor	Minor	No	Yes	No	No
411	None	None	Minor	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No
211	None	None	Major	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No
111	None	None	Minor	Poor	N/A	No	Yes	No	No



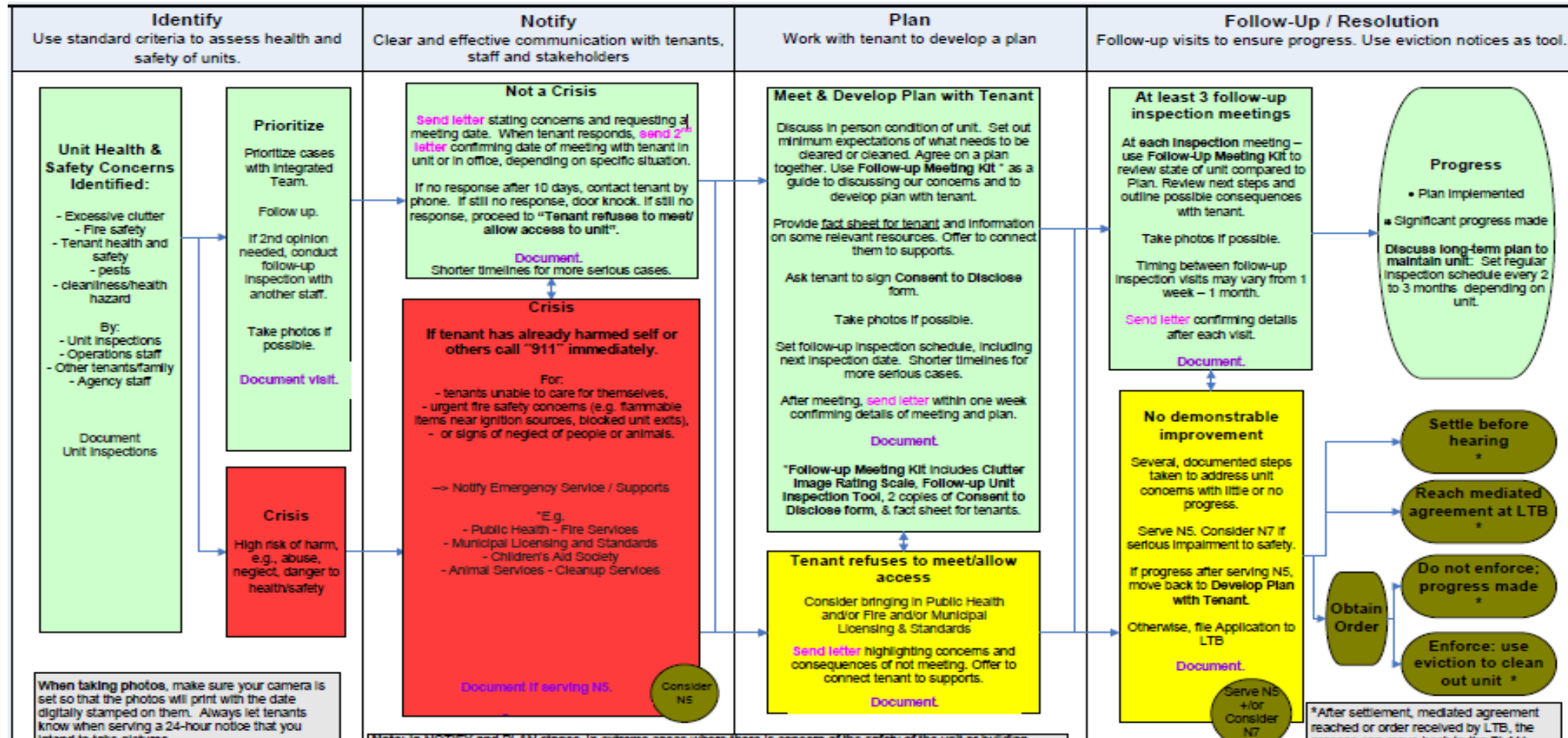
# Developing a process and tools:

- Needs assessment and staff interviews
- Consultation with stakeholders:
  - Partners
  - Tenants
  - Legal clinics
  - Toronto Public Health, Fire and MLS





# Our Process:



# What does not work?

- Forced clean-outs are ineffective beyond the immediate short-term
- They have been shown to 'worsen' and intensify hoarding behaviour



# Intervention Roles:

Two basic roles can help motivate a change process:

1. **Enforcement** clarify the conditions that would lead to a negative outcome and enforce the consequences of not meeting these conditions; and
2. **Support** provide assistance in meeting the conditions to avoid a negative outcome.



# The Roles:

## Enforcement Role:

- Non-judgmental
- Active listening
- Sets limit
- Clear
- Firm
- Can offer support

## Supporter Role:

- Non-judgmental
- Active listening
- Provides assistance with ideas, hands-on work
- Understands limits and reminds but does not enforce
- Acknowledge what tenant is going through



# Developing a Plan with Tenants:

- Work together: agree on goals, next steps and timelines
- Non negotiable
- Clear expectations and consequences. Use of progressive steps.
- Letter after every meeting
- Acknowledge efforts





# Building Relationships:

We can't do it all ourselves. Who else can help?

- Build relationships with community agencies and support services
- Be creative about accessing resources and funding through partners
- Get on-side with municipal partners



# The Results:

- Stronger internal coordination Enhanced
- collaboration with city and other external resources
- Increased effectiveness of interventions
- **Improved service levels to Residents**



# Thank you!



**Richard Grotsch**  
**416-981-4054**

**[Richard.Grotsch@torontohousing.ca](mailto:Richard.Grotsch@torontohousing.ca)**

# Animal Hoarding

**PRESENTED BY:** Heather Brown, Toronto Cat Rescue  
**Session #:** 606 - ONPHA



Toronto Cat Rescue is a registered, no-kill charity run by volunteers.



# Animal Hoarding Defined

*Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium*

- An individual possesses more than the typical number of companion animals.



# Animal Hoarding Defined

- The individual is unable to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter and veterinary care, with this neglect often resulting in starvation, illness and death.





# Animal Hoarding Defined



- The individual is in denial of the inability to provide this minimum care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household and human occupants of the dwelling.



# Who are Animal Hoarders'



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# Typology of animal hoarding

## Overwhelmed caregiver

- ✓ Some awareness, more reality-based
- ✓ More passive acquisition
- ✓ Problems often triggered by change in circumstance
- ✓ Unable to problem-solve effectively
- ✓ Likely to be socially isolated
- ✓ Self-esteem linked to role as caregiver
- ✓ Fewer issues with authorities

## Rescuer Hoarder

- ✓ Mission leading to unavoidable compulsion
- ✓ Fear of death
- ✓ Active vs. passive acquisition
- ✓ S/he is the only one who can provide care
- ✓ Rescue-followed-by adoption becomes rescue-only care
- ✓ May have extensive network of enablers or be a group activity

## Exploiter Hoarder

- ✓ Tends to have sociopathic characteristics
- ✓ Lacks empathy for people or animals
- ✓ Indifferent to harm caused
- ✓ Rejects outsiders' concerns
- ✓ Superficial charm and charisma
- ✓ Lacks guilt or remorse
- ✓ Manipulative and cunning
- ✓ Adopts role of expert with need to control

*From: Animal Hoarding: Structuring interdisciplinary responses to help people, animals, and communities at risk. Patronek, Loar, Nathanson, eds. 2006*

# Signs that may indicate your tenant is an animal hoarder:

- They have numerous animals and may not know the total number of animals in their care if asked.
- There is a strong smell of ammonia or feces coming from the unit
- There may be a strong odour of ammonia on the person



- Individual is isolated from community and appears to be in neglect himself.
- Individual is reluctant to allow anybody in their unit and will make continual excuses to prevent entry.
- Complaints made by neighbours about smell, noise, flea infestations vermin, etc.



- Animals may be emaciated, lethargic, have skin and eye conditions, and not well socialized.



# Complexities in Dealing with Animal Hoarders

- Animals are considered property
- Hoarding is a recognized psychiatric disorder
- There is no legal limit to the number of animals one can own
- Limited enforcement power
- Limited resources in animal welfare groups
- High rate of recidivism



# What can you do?.



# Document Everything!

- Condition of the property
- Condition of the animals
- Complaints received (both official and unofficial)

Use notes, pictures and videos when possible



# Seek Advice

- Local shelter, humane society or rescue group
- OSPCA if cruelty or neglect is suspected
- Department of health, social services, fire, by-law enforcement, etc.
- Peers and colleagues
- Hoarding support services groups



# Offer Help

Try working things out with your tenant if at all possible

Create and monitor a plan with the resident – a written agreement can provide the specific guidelines and requirements.

For Example:

- X number of animals must be removed each week
- X number of animals are allowed to remain with the tenant
- All remaining animals must be spayed/neutered
- Repairs must be completed by x date
- Landlord has permission to enter the unit and monitor progress every x number of days



# Get Legal Advice & Start Eviction Proceedings

Don't Forget to Consider....

- Plan for the animals
- Plan for professional cleaning or remediation services



# Ragdoll Hoard





# Roselawn Hoard



# Humane Society International Transfer



# Thank you!



**Questions?** Email [heatherbrown@torontocatrescue](mailto:heatherbrown@torontocatrescue) or  
call 416-538-8592.