
FACT Sheet: Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force

Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment

February 2018

Mission

Our mission is to provide education, collaboration and support to those who are affected by clutter and hoarding. We accomplish this by providing access to available resources, and by supporting an informed response by individuals and organizations who are charged with addressing this emerging concern affecting our community.

Health and Human Service Significance

Hoarding behavior is characterized by difficulty discarding possessions to the point where the accumulation of these possessions compromises the intended use of living areas, creates distress in daily functioning, and poses risks to the health and safety of individuals in and around the home. In the United States, it is estimated that hoarding affects 2-6% of the population¹ or 13 million people based on the 2016 census², and affects twice the number of individuals with Alzheimer's Disease.³ Extrapolating the national data to the population of Barnstable County⁴, the number of Cape Cod citizens with hoarding disorder is estimated at 8,571 individuals.

With an estimated number of individuals actively hoarding on Cape Cod, it is critical to consider the constellation of individuals, families, neighbors and town officials affected by this newly diagnosed mental illness.⁵ Evidence exists that a building affected by hoarding poses significant risks of enhanced fire danger, degraded indoor air quality, compromised structural integrity, and increased strain on town resources. Indoor health hazards associated with hoarding can adversely affect the health and safety of the resident as well as relatives, health care providers and first responders.

Task Force Description

Formed in 2010, a multi-disciplinary group from government, non-profit sector and service providers came together to form the Task Force. The goals of the Task Force are to develop strategies to provide education, collaboration and support to the community and professionals struggling to help individuals with hoarding disorder.

Education: Provides educational outreach to the community and local professionals to reduce stigma and to increase the overall understanding of hoarding disorder.

Collaboration: Encourages and assists stakeholders to develop strategies to respond to each unique case. It has been shown that the most successful outcomes of hoarding issues are the result of coordinated efforts.

Support: Assist individuals with hoarding disorder by supporting the development of peer groups and by providing guidance and resources to individuals as well as professionals.

Task Force Momentum

Education is the cornerstone of Task Force which provides strategic outreach throughout Barnstable County. Events aimed at reducing stigma and increasing understanding include community programs, panel discussions, film discussions and information sessions. Since its inception, the Task Force has presented an average of two professional trainings per year and has reached over 400 service providers, first responders, government agencies, health and mental health professionals. The Task Force fields calls and emails from individuals struggling with hoarding, concerned family members, service providers, housing agencies and municipalities from each town on Cape Cod. Through this direct contact, the Task Force offers support and case consultation to specifically address each, unique situation.

Peer support groups supported by the Task Force run regularly and provide skill building and support to empower individuals to take action that leads to successful outcomes.

How to Get Involved

The Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force meets the first Thursday of every other month at the Dennis Police Station, 90 Bob Crowell Rd., South Dennis, MA. Meetings are open to professionals interested in networking, learning and sharing information to assist individuals affected by hoarding. Meeting details, membership forms, support group information, resources/tool kits for individuals and professionals are available at www.hoardingcapecod.org.

To learn more about hoarding disorder in Barnstable County, contact Erika Woods, Task Force Chair, Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force Executive Committee at 508-375-6620 or email the task force at: info@hoardingcapecod.org.

1. Epidemiological studies estimating the prevalence of pathological hoarding behavior to be 2–6% (Fullana et al, 2010; Iervolino et al, 2009; Mueller et al, 2009; Ruscio et al, 2010; Samuels et al, 2008; Timpano et al, 2011)
 2. U.S. Population - 323,127,513 on July 1, 2016 - U.S. Census Bureau
 3. An estimated 5.5 million Americans of all ages have Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's Association. 2017 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures. *Alzheimers Dement* 2017; 13:325-373
 4. Barnstable County Population - 214,276 on July 1, 2016 - U.S. Census Bureau
 5. American Psychiatric Association: DSMMD, Fifth Edition. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013
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Contact

For more information, contact Erika Woods, Chair, Cape Cod Hoarding Task Force Executive Committee at 508-375-6620 or erika.woods@barnstablecounty.org.

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