

Signs and Symptoms

In the home, most surfaces such as countertops, sinks, stoves, and desks are piled with items. The clutter may be moved outside to the yard, garage, or vehicles when there is no more room inside the home.

There are stacks of newspapers, magazines, or junk mail.

The person often moves items from one pile to another without throwing away anything.

The person is unable to throw things away and accumulates unnecessary items like trash.

The individual has a hard time managing daily activities, making decisions, and organizing items. They have extreme attachment to items.

The person often experiences shame or embarrassment.

People whose possessions fill their homes and lives often feel alone.

For help, please call:

Healthy Home Initiative
Lorain County Health District
(440) 322-6367

For treatment:

Firelands Counseling and Recovery
(440) 984-3882
A full spectrum of mental health treatment for adults and children. Alcohol/other drug treatment services also available for adults.

The Nord Center
(440) 233-7232
A private, non-profit agency providing comprehensive behavioral and mental health services to children, adolescents, and adults in the greater Lorain County area.

Additional resources:

Adult Protective Services
(440) 284-4465
To report abuse or neglect of adults 60+, including basic needs unmet due to inability to use spaces (kitchen, baths, etc.) for the purpose intended due to clutter.

Area Office On Aging
(440) 326-4800

The Taskforce meets the 3rd Tuesday of Jan., March, May, July, Sept. and Nov. at 10:00 a.m.
Amy Levin Training Center
1165 North Ridge, East
Lorain, Ohio 44055



Lorain County Healthy Home Initiative
Hoarding Taskforce

LORAIN COUNTY TASKFORCE ON HOARDING



Mission: Educate Lorain County residents about the complexity of hoarding behaviors and to work collaboratively with local partners to identify processes and solutions for facilitating access to assessment, intervention, and support resources needed to assist and motivate persons impacted by hoarding behaviors to live safely in the community.

Membership:

Open to professionals and others interested in learning about or helping with hoarding.

Participants

- Adult Protective Service Workers
- Senior Service Providers
- Health and Mental Health Professionals
- Fire Department Representatives
- Housing Representatives
- Lorain County Healthy District
- Professional Organizers

Risk Factors

Hoarding can involve anyone, regardless of age, sex, or economic status. It's not clear how common hoarding is. Here are some risks about hoarding that researchers have come to know:

Age: Hoarding usually starts in early adolescence, around age 13 or 14, but can start even earlier. Hoarding tends to get worse with age.

Family history: There is a very strong connection between having a family member who is a compulsive hoarder and you becoming a hoarder yourself.

Stressful life events: Hoarding can start after a person experiences something that is hard for them to deal with such as the death of a loved one, divorce, eviction, or losing belongings in a fire.

History of alcohol abuse: Approximately half of hoarders have a history of alcohol dependence.

Social isolation: Hoarding can often lead to social isolation. People who hoard are usually socially withdrawn and may isolate themselves. Some people may turn to the comfort of hoarding because they are lonely.

Five Levels of Hoarding



Level 1: Home is accessible. Few spills or pet accidents. No odors, rodents, or insects may be evident. Cluttered, but not excessive.

Level 2: Exit is blocked. Major appliances not working. Medium amount of bug/rodent infestation. Slight odors; garbage overflow; limited housekeeping being accomplished.

Level 3: Clutter spreads outdoors. Two or more appliances not working. Spider/insect webs are noticeable. Obvious odors; heavily soiled areas; hazardous substance found.

Level 4: Structural damage to home; mold or mildew evident. Strong odor; rotting food on counters. Sleeping area unusable.

Level 5: Major structural damage. No power; no water; no sewer. Obvious hazards such as fire or health. House is not livable.

Treatment Options

Mental health clinicians are available at Firelands and the Nord Center that have had training specific to the treatment of hoarding.

The clinicians use a structured program that has shown to be effective in the treatment of hoarding. There are 26 structured sessions that can take up to a year to complete.

The clinicians will meet with clients in their homes and at their office. The clinician will not clean out the home. They will work with the client to help enable them to declutter their environments.

Community Involvement

Hoarding is a community problem.

People with hoarding and cluttering behaviors may need a variety of services, including healthcare services, behavioral health services, social services such as adult protective services, and legal services. Their behaviors may involve a number of public agencies, including the Department of Aging & Adult Services, the Department of Public Health, the Housing Authority, the Fire Department, the Police Department, Animal Control, Mental Health Centers, and Senior Service Agencies.

They may also interact with private agencies, such as cleaning agencies, professional organizers, and landlords.