



RESOURCES

Hoarding Help and Support

Do:

- Build and maintain trust at all times
- Listen carefully to the person's fears and concerns; set aside your agenda
- Have a conversation if you have concerns, not a judgmental or defensive argument
- Create a goal together or work towards a goal that the person hoarding has for themselves
- Seek therapy from a professional therapist. Family should take on the role of supporter and encourager.

Do Not:

- Force the person to clean, or get rid of their possessions. It needs to be a process and at their own will.**
- Forcibly move a person who is hoarding, or force a clean-out. This can make the situation much worse.**
- Get defensive, shame or blame the person who is hoarding.
- Attempt to give therapy to the person hoarding if you are not a licensed therapist.

****Local authorities must enforce housing codes and may deem a home unfit for habitation, force someone to leave, or give deadlines for clean out**

For more information about hoarding or how to support a person who hoards, contact:

Portage County Health and Human Services - 715-345-5350 option 2

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Portage County - 715-346-1401



Information provided in part by:



<http://thehoardingproject.org>

"Portage County provides employment and services to any eligible person without regard to age, race, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, handicap, physical condition, developmental disability [as defined in s.51.01(5)], arrest or conviction record [s.111.32], sexual orientation, marital status, or ability to pay."

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Portage County
Hoarding Task Force

What is Hoarding?

Hoarding is a mental health issue that has public safety implications.

Causes of Hoarding

Hoarding behavior has multiple internal and external causes including:

Health and Safety Risks of Hoarding

Hoarding involves:

- Excessive acquisition of stuff (not universal in all persons that hoard)
- Emotional attachment to possessions and anxiety around letting go of items
- Fear that getting rid of something will also get rid of memories
- Can be associated with obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, anxiety, attention deficit disorder and trauma

Effective treatment addresses both public safety and individual mental health concerns.

Hoarding results in:

- Living spaces that cannot be used for their intended purposes
- Significant emotional distress or physical impairment
- Emotional distress to those close to the person who is hoarding
- Financial stress
- Multiple health and safety issues
- Home may be deemed unfit for habilitation and could result in eviction or other action from local authorities.

Biological Factors:

- There is some evidence that hoarding behavior can be passed down genetically from parent to child.
- People may learn hoarding behavior from family members. Some may have the opposite reaction and want nothing to do with hoarding.

Psychological Factors:

- People who hoard may have underlying trauma, unresolved loss or mood disorders.
- Hoarding behavior may be an attempt to fill a void resulting from loss
- Hoarding may be an attempt to manage anxiety or stress.
- Person may be unaware of underlying causes and their effort on behavior.

Social Factors:

- Positive social relationships can lower the severity of hoarding.
- Negative interactions in relationships can increase severity of hoarding.
- Major life events like a death in the family, divorce, or life transitions can worsen hoarding behavior.
- Social isolation, embarrassment and the social stigma of hoarding can interfere in receiving treatment or asking for help.

Physical Safety Risks include:

- Fire hazards including lack of working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Blocked exits
- Risk of falls/falling items causing injuries
- Lack of routine home maintenance
- Structural damage to building from increased weight and volume of clutter
- Risk of eviction and homelessness

Health Risks include:

- Poor hygiene (cannot use bathroom)
- Poor nutrition (cannot use kitchen)
- Neglect of medical needs
- Neglect of mental health needs
- Poor financial management
- Physical problems caused by sleeping somewhere other than in a bed
- Asthma, allergies, headaches, and other conditions caused by dust and mold
- Rodents/insect infestation
- Bacterial infections and/or parasites from exposure to waste

Do not attempt to clean out a home that poses a potential health or safety risk without consulting professionals.

See Resources section for more information.