

**The Gaithersburg Hoarding Task Force
Annual Report
September 2011**

Task force members studied what had been accomplished to date in Montgomery County, MD and found previous efforts in the City of Gaithersburg, MD were not continuing to develop even though the need persisted. After identifying continued interest they contacted interdisciplinary professionals who had a stake in hoarding issues. After studying other task forces in the country to look at best practices the Gaithersburg Hoarding Task Force (GHTF) was born in February 2009. The formation of a multi-agency interdisciplinary task force allowed for consolidated resources and ensured integrated approaches to physical, emotional and safety associated with hoarding.

The GHTF is currently made up of a group of service providers in support of people with hoarding behaviors in order to help them manage their hoarding and subsequently remain in their homes safely.

FY 2011 GHTF Participants

Each participating agency and professional brings a unique specialty to the task force. During the past year we made every effort to combine the resources of participating agencies to provide a coordinated response to residential hoarding when it threatens life, safety and property. Task force meetings were held monthly with ongoing education of members. Code and mental health issues remained a primary focus. In addition, ongoing discussions identified and addressed gaps in service.

| Name | Agency/Organization | Agency Role |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maureen Herndon • Emily Rainone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Gaithersburg, Maryland Community Services and Code Enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Client base ○ |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pazit Aviv, LGSW • Gail Gunod-Green • Larry Johnson • Howard Pumphrey • Susan Smith, MSW • Connelly Stewart, LCPC • Rebecca urban, MSW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Client base |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Elspeth Bell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Behavioral Therapy Center of Greater Washington | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides cognitive behavior therapy & family support |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth Shapiro, LCSW-C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Social Service Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mental health provider targeting family members |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim Emerson, MSW • Helene Harris | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Services, Inc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mental health provider targeting those that hoard |

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|---|--|---------------------------|
| • Alisa Levy | • Embrace You Space | ○ Professional organizing |
| • Kathy Thrower | • Rebuilding Together | ○ General Support |
| • Debbie Christner, • Matthew Kelleher • Bonnie Klem, LCSW-C • Diana Schofield, LCSW-C • Julia Thom | • Montgomery County Adult Protective Services • Fire and Rescue Service • Montgomery County Adult Protective Services • Child Protective services • Code Enforcement | ○ Safety |
| • | • | ○ |
| • Miriam Yarmolinsky, CWRE | • Affiliated Sante Group | ○ Consumer support |

2011 Task Force Goals

- Move beyond research and planning to implementation of interventions within the City of Gaithersburg.
- Improve the City of Gaithersburg’s capacity to handle hoarding situations.
- Research best practice models to work with people with hoarding behaviors.
- Educate the local community on appropriate intervention strategies
- Increase the pool of Gaithersburg and other local professionals able to competently work with people with hoarding behaviors and their families.
- Provide community education, information, resources and support to people with hoarding behaviors and their families and friends.
- Educate the community regarding volunteer opportunities and services available.
- Develop ongoing and sustainable intervention and treatment strategies for clients and their families.

2011 Summary of Accomplishments

During the past year the task force has been productive and successful. We moved beyond research and planning to implementation of interventions within the City of Gaithersburg and community education through the Metro Washington area. We are proud to submit this report of our joint efforts to improve the City’s capacity to deal with hoarding situations. Below is a list of accomplishments by category of need. The reported activities were performed by Tasks Force members.

Task Force Membership

- Successfully engaged City of Gaithersburg government and nonprofit representatives from various fields including: planning and code, fire services, mental health programs, and community social service and housing agencies.

Case Coordination and Management

Over the past year, the task force consulted on 10 cases within the City of Gaithersburg. Ongoing cases were re-visited as needed. Facilitated staffings to discuss intervention plans complemented the task forces role. Below are three examples of the type of work we did.

Case 1

The GHTF worked with Rebuilding Together to transform the first floor a client's home. The task force cleaned out and de-cluttered the home with the assistance of professional organizers. All furniture and other items from the kitchen, dining room and living room were packed and moved into storage with the assistance of Rebuilding Together and task force volunteers.

Next, volunteers from Rebuilding Together replaced flooring, lighting, and the refrigerator, range and toilet. Minor repairs were made and the entire first floor was painted. The next phase included returning the items from storage and setting up the "new" home. The client was given some new and donated furniture and storage pieces. In addition, the client received cleaning supplies and cleaning lessons so she could keep her home in optimal condition.

Case 2

Having failed a Code Inspection, we were to assist a client in reducing the items in her apartment. Many items were moved to a storage unit in order to be able to maneuver around the home. Over several sessions the entire kitchen was cleaned out as well as part of the hallway. At that point, the client felt that she would be able to proceed with the assistance of a friend. She has since passed inspection.

Case 3

Having failed inspection and received a Notice to Vacate, the task force, with the assistance of volunteers from Church of the Holy Redeemer, helped the client declutter and clean up her home. Although the next inspection was passed, efforts to stay the eviction were unsuccessful. We then helped the client to pack and move to a new home. Now that the client has settled in and has overcome medical issues, we are continuing to support the downsizing process.

Family Member Education Support Groups

- JSSA offered its first educational seminar series for family members of people with hoarding behaviors. Based on the evaluations, the group was a great success. JSSA will offer this program periodically throughout the year.
- JSSA planned and organized a new low cost monthly support group for family members of people with hoarding behaviors. The first session will begin November 23, 2011.
- FSI planned a new therapy group to coincide with JSSA's family group, for people who hoard. The group is scheduled to start September 2011.

- JSSA created a tip sheet for family members of people with hoarding behaviors for distribution at its support and education groups.
- JSSA updated the telephone screening tool used to screen those wishing to attend a family member group.
- JSSA sent periodic emails to participating education and support group participants with relevant updates of services, activities and recourse in the community.

Client Therapy and Support Groups

- FSI is planned a new therapy group for people who hoard to coincide with JSSA's family member group. The group is scheduled to start September 2011.

Community and Service Provider Education

- Information regarding the task force and its activities were disseminated to members of the Gaithersburg Coalition of Providers, Interfaith Alliance, City HOA's and the general community.
- Information was shared with the Gaithersburg community on the availability of the Behavior Therapy Center's Hoarding Info Session and support group in Silver Spring.
- A flyer was produced on hoarding and disseminated at various City events including the Celebrate Gaithersburg and Asbury Methodist Information Fairs.
- The City of Gaithersburg updated its website to include a new webpage about the task force, a current definition of hoarding, task force's activities and annual reports.
- Dr. Bell presented a workshop entitled *Hoarding and De-Cluttering* on attended by 30 people.
- Participated in City fairs and expos such as the housing expo, the during which we provided information to the general public about hoarding and the task forces activities.
- Attended the Asbury Methodist Village Information Fair and offered a one hour workshop on hoarding.
- Over 100 HOC staff attended a three hour training titled *Working Collaboratively in Hoarding Situations*.
- Dr. Bell was interviewed on NPR's Diane Rehm Show.
- Health care in public housing National Training Conference: HOC presented on effective interventions strategies with public housing residents
- Coalition for the homeless "the HOME" conference
- HOC staff presented on hoarding intervention for property HOC managers working in the county and City.

Volunteer Recruiting & Other Efforts

- Trained Habitat for Humanity volunteers on how to work with hoarding situations.
- Trained and recruited a total of 5 volunteers over the past year to help with clean-up efforts for cases and collaborated with condominium managements to pay for cleanup efforts where possible.
- Church of the redeemer provided volunteers to work on two cases

- Susan Smith offered training for Rebuilding Together volunteers, and they worked with Bent Twig and
- Recruited 3 student volunteers to be trained by member of the task force.

Training and utilization

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Education in the Community and at Conferences

- Shared information on an ongoing basis with the Gaithersburg community
- Sponsored hoarding/cluttering information sessions
- Disseminated information to agency and organizational providers in the form of flyers and via the City of Gaithersburg's website.
- Had articles written in the local media regarding the task force and hoarding
- Provided hoarding intervention trainings
- Partnered with Montgomery County government to sponsor training on hoarding for local providers
- Developed ongoing trainings for Housing Opportunity Commission staff
- Wrote a grant applications for cleanup services, education materials, training mental health providers on treatment modalities

Advocacy

- Task Force members actively participated in Montgomery County's one year Hoarding Task Force set up to evaluate the situation in the County and offer recommendations.

Capacity building with mental health providers

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Grants

- JSSA collaborated with the task force to train a selected group of mental health professionals on evidence-based cognitive behavioral techniques. Unfortunately we were not awarded this funding. However, in FY 12 JSSA will submit a similar grant proposal to United Way.
- In collaboration with Rebuilding Together the task force obtained a FY 2010 City CDBG grant to pay for services needed to resolve hoarding cases. The grant was renewed in FY 2011 as the result of the task force's efforts.
- HOC will submit a proposal to county CDBG to work with HOC cases not in the city, using city CDBG grant model in September 2012

Research and Consultations

- Conducted ongoing research on intervention and outreach models for people with hoarding behaviors and their families.

- Consulted from other cities interested in starting a hoarding task force. Cities included Arlington and Fairfax Counties in VA; Boston, MA; and Rockledge, FL (aka the “Space Coast”).
- Dr. Bell represented the task force by participating in Montgomery County’s one year Hoarding Task Force.
- Reviewed at risk hoarding cases referred by the City of Gaithersburg. Discussion included safety, code and mental health issues of residents brought to the attention of the task force by the City.
- Offer ongoing discussions to identify and address gaps in service.

Plans for the Future

- The GHTF will host a panel at the NAPO national conference in Baltimore on March 22, 2012 entitled *Stand Up & Be Counted! Support a Hoarding Task Force!*
- The task force will recruit volunteers from Montgomery College through volunteer fairs.
- The HTTF will continue to utilize CDBG funds to respond to cases in the city and offer follow up to cases that have resolved the crisis.
- The Howard County, Maryland Area Agency on Aging invited clinical social worker Beth Shapiro to discuss basic inform for family members and hoarding as part of their Health and Wellness and Proaging track at their annual expo in Columbia, MD at which 6000 people are expected to attend.