

# Gaithersburg Hoarding Task Force

## Progress Report 2016

### Summary of Activities

Gaithersburg Hoarding Task Force (HTF) was established as a consortium of providers in February of 2009 after 3 years of research and several City of Gaithersburg sponsored trainings for area providers. Consultations with area task forces including both the Arlington and Fairfax programs were completed.

Since its formalization of service coordination , the HTF has served over 35 City households (an average of 6-7 a year) who are dealing with a hoarding behaviors, provided hundreds of professionals education on how to work with clients with hoarding behaviors clinically and how to develop a coordinated service task force. Information, education and support groups have also and provided outreach and education events to the general community.

This is the Task Force's first 10 year report.

The mission of the Gaithersburg Hoarding Task Force is to assist and support people and their families in the City of Gaithersburg who are in need as a result of hoarding behaviors. The Task Force strives to raise awareness and educate the community and other service providers about hoarding issues and the resources available.

#### List of Participating Members and Roles since Inception

Name	Agency/Organization	Agency Role
*Tawana Lofton,* Maureen Herndon , *Steve Marquina and Neighborhood Services	City of Gaithersburg, Maryland Community Services and Code Enforcement	Case Coordination and Code Inspections. Education and Outreach Task Force Coordination
*Susan Smith, MSW *Rebecca Grayson, MSW	Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission	Case Coordination for HOC Clients. Education and Outreach
*Dr. Elspeth Bell	Behavior Therapy Center and Private Practice since 2014	Founding Trainer and Consultant. Cognitive Behavior Therapy & family support. Education
Howard Pumphrey	Montgomery County's Core Services	County mental health representative

Miriam Yarmolinsky	Affiliated Sante	
Beth Shapiro	Jewish Social Service Agency	Family Support Groups
*Alisa Levy	Embrace Your Space	Professional Organizing. Education
Emma Byrns Kathy Thrower	Rebuilding Together	Case Coordination for low income home owners in program
Thom Harr	Family Services	
Matthew Kelleher	Fire and Rescue Service	City Fire Safety and Code
*Rika Granger *Laura Begosh *Tamara George	Aspire Counseling Agency	Mental Health Counseling
Diana Schofield, LCSW-C *Chris Carmello, LGSW	Child Welfare Services Code Enforcement	Case assistance

Current members are denoted by a \*

## Summary of Accomplishments

### Task Force Membership

- Membership remains stable and represents the four essential partnership components of: Code Enforcement, Mental Health Services and Case Coordination and Professional Organizing
- Monthly meetings are held with consistent participation and active case review.
- Recruitment efforts in 2016 focus on volunteer and professional support for the work of the professional organizer and continued trainings and participation by area mental health professionals.

### Case Coordination and Management

Since its inception, the Task Force has consulted on cases within the City of Gaithersburg. On-going cases were re-visited as needed. Facilitated staffings to discuss intervention plans complemented the Task Force's roles. Cases have involved coordinated interventions, goal oriented contracts resulting in clients succeeding in maintaining their homes in a healthy and safe manner.

Below are three examples:

#### Case 1

Client was referred after failing inspection. A referral was made to the Task Force by her landlord. Client was known to Task Force and agreed to work with staff to resolve the situation. Client worked with staff on a weekly basis to slowly de-clutter her space and

to develop the necessary skills to sustain a home that is within expected standards. Clients has since been able to pass inspections independently

#### Case 2

After failing two inspections, the client was referred to the Task Force by an inspector. He was not known previously to the Task Force. Client agreed to work with the Task Force, albeit, reluctantly. In addition to the severe clutter, he also had infestation in his apartment which complicated the work. He worked with the Task Force's professional organizer and was able to pass inspection.

#### Case 3

A home owner on a fixed income has been working with the Task Force for a couple of years. Her home needed major renovations, and Rebuilding Together was able to support her. In preparation for Project Day work, professional organizers worked to de-clutter and box all items on client's first floor. They moved items to storage. The old, soiled flooring was replaced. The client also received new kitchen appliances, lighting and the entire first floor was painted. Post-Project Day, after the new flooring was installed, the items were returned to the home and organizers continued to work with the client to organize her "new" home.

**The Family Member Education and Support Groups run by JSSA were discontinued after the staff position was ended.**

- JSSA offering its monthly support group for family members of people with hoarding behaviors since November 23, 2011 until 2015.
- During FY 2013, there were 42 occurrences of attendance at the monthly support group by 24 family members.
- JSSA created a tip sheet for family members of people with hoarding behaviors for distribution at its support and education groups and to all task force training attendees.
- JSSA continues to send 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**

- In 2009 FSI is implementing a therapy group for people with hoarding behaviors which has been since discontinued. Development of a new group is being discussed.

## Community and Service Provider Education

- The Task Force presented *Stand Up and Be Counted – Support A Hoarding Task Force* at the [National Association of Professional Organizers](#) 2012 Annual Conference.
- As a result of NAPO presentation, the Task Force was asked to contribute to a book to be published by [the Institute for Challenging Disorganization](#). The book is entitled *The ICD Guide to Collaborating with Professional Organizers: For Related Professionals*
- The Task Force presented a day-long training *Effective Hoarding Interventions: Hands On De-Cluttering Techniques for Professionals* in early 2013 and again in 2015. The training was designed for mental health and other professionals who serve people with hoarding behavior. It was well attended and had a waitlist.
- As a result of the success of the Effective Hoarding Intervention training, the Task Force offered a day-long training in November 2013 for professional in partnership with the Montgomery County Continuing Education Center.
- HOC staff presented on hoarding intervention for HOC property managers working in the county and City.
- The Task Force developed a postcard to be used for outreach and education for the general community and for City landlords.
- A Task Force member co-presented at the NAPO Special Interest Group for Working with Seniors. The Task Force was an example of how to provide services to low income seniors .
- The city has improved the website for the task force. See <http://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/hoarding>.
- Members have updated and improved on a Resource List for Working with Hoarding Situations.
- A page on the City website has been updated to include resource materials and task force contact information.

## Volunteer Recruiting & Other Efforts

- Trained Montgomery College students and Rebuilding Together volunteers.
- Open house event held for prospective organizers to come and learn more about the task force and its work.
- Since 2010, HOC has been training social work student interns to perform de-clutter sessions for its residents. The interns have been working with five hoarding cases within city limits. In 2016 the HIT Team was renamed the Clutter Intervention Team (CIT) and continues to work with HOC residents with Hoarding Behaviors affecting their housing stability

## **Grants**

- City CDBG grants in FY10 and FY11 were designated for the task force and as a result of the Task Force's efforts funds to hire a professional organizer became a part of the City of Gaithersburg's Community Services operating budget.
- FY17 CS budget includes over \$9,000 in monies to pay for a professional organizer

## **Research and Consultations**

- Task Force members consulted with a variety of professionals from across the county and around the country about how to establish a Task Force and best practices. Consultations with other groups include Carroll County, MC HHS, MCCH and several ICD Teleclasses for professional organizers.
- **Challenges/Goal for 2016**
  - Recruitment of additional mental health professionals
  - Recruitment of additional hands on professionals to assist organizer
  - Development of additional trained case workers who can assist with follow up