

## Manifestations of Hoarding

- **Acquisition of Items**  
The items were on sale or were a great deal.
- **Saving of Items**  
The items hold sentimental value or are seen as instrumental.
- **Disorganization**  
Things are kept in piles and the individual is afraid of discarding something that is important.

*"An individual may be in denial that he/she is a hoarder. They believe that they are doing something important by not wasting".*

## If someone you know, or one of your residents, hoards:

- Listen without being judgmental.
- Treat people who hoard as you would like to be treated, with respect and dignity.
- Focus on the person's good qualities, not the clutter in the dwelling.
- Recognize small steps of progress in eliminating clutter.
- Remember that good coaches help shape the decision so that it is easier to make; they do not make the decision for the person.

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# HOARDING



## Hoarders, Housing Providers and Virginia Fair Housing Law

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## What is Hoarding?

Hoarding is the excessive accumulation of items and the inability to discard them. Also known by the medical name “*disposophobia*,” it has gained more public awareness due to shows like “Hoarders” and “Hoarding: Buried Alive.”

## Who is a Hoarder?

- Hoarders can be men, women or children of any age—though they tend to be mostly elderly women.
- Hoarders are often intelligent and friendly.
- Hoarders are often fearful of authority.
- Hoarders are often ashamed, embarrassed and overwhelmed about their situation.
- An overwhelming number of hoarders are often obese.

## How Prevalent is Hoarding?

According to studies, hoarders make up 2-6% of the world’s population. This accounts for about 15 million adults—compared with the estimated 4.5 million elderly people who are suffering from Alzheimer’s or dementia.



## Hoarding and Co-Morbidity

In addition to hoarding, hoarders may also exhibit symptoms of the presence of one or more other disorders, such as:

- Major Depression - **60%**

- Social Phobia - **30%**
- General Anxiety Disorder - **20%**
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder – **18%**
- ADD/ADHD - **4%**

*"A hoarder is not messy, lazy or defiant. The person has an illness that may require a reasonable accommodation."*

## Hoarding that Violates Health & Safety Codes is a Lease Violation



Examples of lease violations include:

- **Odor**
- **Infestation**
- **Blocked Exits**
- **Fire Hazards** (blocked exits; paper near stove/vents; storing combustible items; resident is a smoker)
- **Animals** (multiple; unattended litter or feces; property damage)
- **Excessive Garbage**
- **Health/Fire Department Citations**
- **Unusable Bathroom Facilities**

## Reasonable Accommodations

***Changes in rules and/or policies that will allow residents with disabilities equal use and enjoyment of their dwelling.***

- In the case of hoarding, this could be allowing the resident to remain in the dwelling longer than usual to address the lease violation.
- The accommodation needed may include time or assistance to clean up the clutter enough to be in compliance with the lease.
- It does not mean the hoarder is allowed to violate safety and health rules indefinitely. Any imminent threats—such as fire, structural problems or contamination—must be addressed immediately.

## For Hoarders who meet the definition of “disability” under the Fair Housing Law ...

Housing providers must offer a reasonable accommodation even if they do not:



- Ask for an accommodation
- Admit to having a disability
- Agree that the unit needs cleaning

## Instead...

- Set goals
- Create a Plan
- Schedule follow-ups

*Hoarding is now classified by the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disabilities (DSM-5) as a disability.*