

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.

FREE FAIR HOUSING SEMINARS AVAILABLE ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

VISIT

<http://www.dpor.virginia.gov/FairHousing/>

Select the **calendar icon**



or the **Education and Outreach** tab to find and register for upcoming seminars.



VIRGINIA FAIR HOUSING OFFICE

Phone: 804-367-8530

TOLL FREE: 888-551-3247

TDD: Call Virginia Relay 711

Fax: 866-480-8333

FairHousing@dpor.virginia.gov

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.

Revised by MDM 6-2020

HOARDING



Hoarders, Housing Providers and Virginia Fair Housing Law

VIRGINIA FAIR HOUSING OFFICE



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.