

Document 1 – Beacon Hoarding Protocol

Protocol for Addressing Hoarding Issues

At Beacon Communities

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Hoarding presents such a difficult and time-consuming issue for an RSC to address in conjunction with the multiple responsibilities that an RSC must contend with in the course of his/her work. Nevertheless, addressing hoarding issues in a respectful, consistent and timely manner is crucial to maintaining tenancy, preserving our housing and ensuring quality of life for *all* residents of our communities. Following is a comprehensive protocol to be implemented to help standardize how the RSC responds to resident hoarding issues with support from the Management Team.

Again, we must make a more concerted effort to alleviate this complex problem within our communities in order to *improve the quality of life for all of our residents, to ensure resident safety within their apartments and to protect the physical assets on our properties.*

1. All RSC's should compile a current list of any and all resources in the area that might assist with hoarding issues and become familiar with how to access such resources. *See Sample List of Supportive Service Providers compiled by Sr. RSC, Mike Batory (APPENDIX A).*
2. List should include the following agencies and organizations:
 - Hoarding Task Force groups in the area (RSC should attend Task Force meetings regularly as schedule allows.)
 - Cleanout and home organization agencies such as Service Master, Lady Bug, 1(800) *Got Junk*
 - Local ASAP (Aging Services Access Point) – agency providing “heavy chore services
 - Home Health Care agencies
 - Group Adult Foster Care (GAFC)
 - Department of Children & Families (DCF) in Mass or Department of Social Services (DSS)
 - Department of Mental Health
 - Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)
 - Inspectional Services Department
 - Fire Department
 - Elder Protective Services
 - Adult-Disabled Protective Services
3. Upon learning of a hoarding issue, all RSC's should conduct an inspection using the **HOMES Multi-Disciplinary Risk Assessment and Uniform Inspection Checklist** to identify scope of

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hoarding issue and begin to focus on areas to be addressed. Detailed documentation of the presenting violations is very important to achieving successful outcomes. (Forms are included in APPENDIX A.)

4. RSC should ask for permission to take photos of apartment to document baseline of hoarding issue so that future photos can show progress being made in addressing the situation. If there are health & safety and/or sanitary code violations it is mandatory that photos be taken to document these conditions.

Note: Imminent threats to health & safety (usually fire, structural problem or contamination) must be addressed immediately. Imminent threats to health and safety constitute a state of self-neglect on the part of the resident and should be reported to appropriate Protective Services Agency - *Child, Adult-Disabled, Elderly or Animal Welfare Control.*

5. All RSC's should send a letter to resident detailing scope of hoarding problems in the apartment including lease violations, State Sanitary Code and/or State Fire Code violations that conditions are violating. Letter should also include request for meeting with a *date* and *time* for meeting and request to contact RSC or PM *as soon as possible* if meeting cannot be kept. (Sample Lease violation letter, Mass Sanitary Code/HUD Lease Violations –HOARDING are enclosed in APPENDIX A.)
6. Meeting should be held at the Management Office, not in the resident's apartment. Meeting should include the following:
 - a. RSC and Property Manager should review *each* specific violation as outlined in letter. Discuss *why* the hoarding issue must be addressed – concern for resident and neighbor's safety, sanitary issues posing a threat to health and safety, inability to exit apartment through window or doors in emergency, and Management's responsibility to HUD to ensure habitable/safe condition of the apartment.
 - b. RSC should offer to make a Reasonable Accommodation for resident which means allowing the resident *time* and *assistance* to address the issues *sufficiently* to come back into lease compliance. The RSC should *explain his/her role in helping* the resident to obtain services to address the hoarding and desire to work with the resident to put services in place to help the resident to maintain his/her tenancy in the apartment.
 - c. Property Manager should address the *consequences* of not addressing the hoarding issues in the apartment – sending resident to court, possible eviction from apartment.
7. If resident isn't able to acknowledge the hoarding problem, need to address it and will not sign a *Release of Information* for RSC to reach out to service providers and/or family members, the RSC should contact the Emergency Contact Person listed on the resident's lease *as the resident is putting his/her tenancy at-risk constituting an emergency situation*. If the RSC is able to obtain

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contact information about other family members who are known to be involved with the resident it is advisable to seek assistance here also.

8. In making contact with the Emergency Contact Person and/or family members the RSC should explain in detail the seriousness of the situation and need to get resident assistance in dealing with the hoarding issue and ascertain whether this person (Emergency Contact) can be of assistance in convincing the resident of the need to work with the RSC and possibly provide some hands-on assistance to the resident.
9. If the Emergency Contact Person and/or family member is unable or unwilling to assist and does not identify other family or friends who may be of help the RSC *must assess* what other resources are available to assist the resident. If this is an elderly or disabled resident- Home Health Agency, VNA's, local ASAP (Aging Services Access Point), Group Adult Foster Care (GAFC) agencies and Mental Health agencies may be able to assist. Families with hoarding issues may be eligible for assistance from the Department of Social Services or parenting assistance programs.
10. It may also be useful to contact the Housing Authority or other agency that holds the residents mobile voucher to make them aware of the hoarding issue to assist in getting the resident to see the seriousness of the problem if applicable. Fear of losing a housing voucher may provide some motivation to address the issue in some cases.
11. If the resident is able to acknowledge the problem and is willing to sign a *Release of Information* the RSC should contact any and all of the following to begin to create a plan of action for addressing the hoarding issue:
 - Service Providers such as Home Health Agency, PCA Agency, Adult Day Care Agency, GAFC, Visiting nurses involved with the resident
 - Doctors, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Mental Health Counselors involved with the resident
 - Family & friends

Note: Confidentiality does not apply to Protective referrals – Elder Services, Disabled Persons Protective Commission and Department of Social Services. A Release of Information is not needed to obtain services if such referrals are being made to obtain assistance for the resident.

12. Create an *overall* plan of action *with* the resident, plan should provide a detailed outline of areas to be addressed and expectations for each area i.e. KITCHEN - kitchen stovetop and oven will be cleared of all items, canned goods will be removed from storage in the microwave oven, etc.
This plan will be known as the Accommodation Action Plan that corresponds to the RSC's

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responsibility to address the hoarding issue as a Reasonable Accommodation since individuals who hoard have a disability as established in the *DSM V- Diagnostic & Statistical Manual for Mental Health Disorders*. (Sample Accommodation Action Plan is included in APPENDIX A.)

13. Accommodation Action Plan should include a *reasonable* timeframe in which to accomplish tasks outlined in each area. Plan should also include a “point person” who is responsible for communicating progress and problems with action plan to the RSC on a *weekly* basis. Point person may be from the Home Health Agency, Mental Health Clinic, GAFC, Department of Social Services, and/or family member etc.

The “point person” (occupational therapist, case manager and/or mental health counselor should work with the resident to establish a more detailed breakdown of the work that needs to take place (daily or smaller increments) to de-clutter, sanitize and organize the apartment to bring it into lease compliance within the timeframes established by the Accommodation Action Plan.

ANY task plans created by the point person should be attached to the Accommodation Action Plan as an Addendum.

RSC should complete a Beacon Hoarding Entry Form for each resident with a hoarding issue and send form to AVP’s of Resident Services – information to be compiled in an *up-to-date* report on hoarding issues across the portfolio. (Sample Hoarding Entry Form is included in APPENDIX A.)

Sr. RSC’s are responsible for following up with RSC’s assigned to them in order to monitor progress in addressing hoarding issues. The Sr. RSC should check-in bi-weekly with the RSC and/or PM and offer assistance as needed.

14. RSC should ensure that the resident has assistance in the process of sorting, discarding, organizing of apartment items and cleaning as needed. If resident does not qualify for existing resources to address the hoarding issue, the RSC should discuss with Property Manager the possibility of accessing funds to purchase services from a commercial business such as Service Master, Lady Bug Cleaners or other area cleanout and organizing business.
15. All those involved with delivering “hands on” assistance to residents should follow *Helpful Hints for Sorting and Cleaning* and *Effective Communication Strategies* as outlined in Helpful Strategies for Hoarding Cases by Jesse Edsell-Vetter, MBHP Case Management Specialist. This document provides guidelines for dealing respectfully and appropriately with residents while assisting in the removal and organizing of items. (*Helpful Hints...* is included in APPENDIX C.)
16. If timeframes for action plan are not being met and no discernible progress is being made overall in addressing the hoarding issue, MASSHOUSING recommends taking the resident to court so that the resident understands the *seriousness* of the issue and so that plan to correct

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the hoarding problem can be *enforceable*. As stated in MASSHOUSING hoarding training “*You almost always need Court Involvement to be effective.*”

17. *Request a Tenancy Preservation referral* in any housing court jurisdiction. Get a specific *written agreement* from the court to enforce the Accommodation Action Plan (AAP). The court agreement should indicate *timeline* for complying with the AAP.
18. If the AAP is not followed within the agreed upon timeframe and no progress has been made Management should take resident back to court in violation of the court agreement. Eviction proceedings should be initiated.
19. If goals of the action plan have been achieved according to the court agreement a member of Beacon staff (RSC, Property Manager, Assistant Property Manager, Maintenance) should assess the apartment conditions *every three months* using the Uniform Inspection Checklist to monitor apartment condition.
20. Monitoring of residents identified with hoarding issues *must* be an on-going task in order to assist the resident in seeing that the apartment is maintained ensuring the resident’s continued tenancy. The RSC is responsible for *establishing* scheduled monthly inspections of the hoarding resident’s apartment. Inspections should be conducted throughout the resident tenancy at the Beacon community. All Beacon staff at the property should be included in rotation of inspections as necessary to ensure proper monitoring of apartment condition.
21. Participation in Peer Support Groups can be beneficial to assisting the resident in maintaining the apartment in compliance with his/her lease. If such groups exist in the area of the resident community, referral should be made to such groups as appropriate. (Information on Peer Support Groups is included in Hoarding Best Practice Guide, APPENDIX C.)
22. RVP’s should be provided with a monthly report summarizing the status of hoarding issues at their respective properties. RVP’s should follow-up with Sr. RSC’s assigned to their region to monitor progress of addressing hoarding issues.
23. RVP’s and PM’s should consider putting a line item in the community’s RSC Budget for assistance with Hoarding/Infestation Prep to provide the RSC with access to funds for services when there are no alternative free services available to address these issues.