

Multnomah County
Hoarding Task Force

Report



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The Multnomah County Hoarding Task Force aims to establish and sustain a network of trained professionals within the community. This network provides information, access to resources, and consultation regarding hoarding. The Task Force is dedicated to utilizing person-centered best practices and sharing the responsibility for community education and engagement.

Hoarding is characterized by the persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.

Hoarding presents a complex challenge for the community, encompassing psychological, physical health, and public safety concerns. Hoarding can be dangerous because it can make it hard for firefighters to rescue people, and it can also lead to people getting evicted from their homes.

USA growth in storage units

1984

Storage facilities



6,600

Storage units



3.6 million

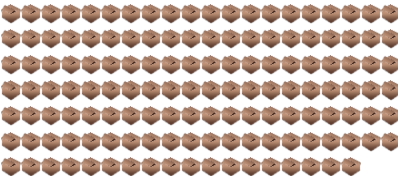
2023

Storage facilities

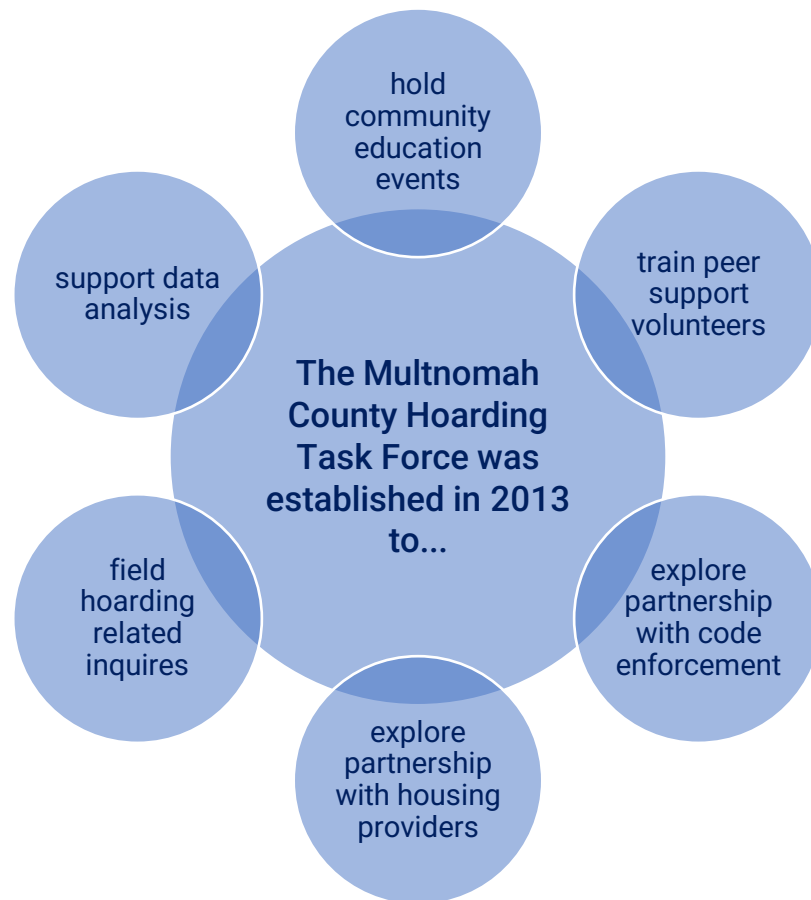


51,296

Storage units



28.0 million



Steering Committee Priority Goals

- Maintain the County public website for hoarding behavior information and training requests.
- Conduct intentional outreach to underserved communities to ensure equitable access to hoarding resources and information.
- Provide training to professional and community groups.
- Expand the network of individuals trained in strengths-based, person-centered approaches to support those affected by hoarding behavior.
- Collect, store, and evaluate data reported by people with knowledge or experience with hoarding in Oregon.
- Maintain a list of subject matter experts available for consultation.
- Identify and develop opportunities for new resources.



Sometimes, people who live with severe and persistent mental health pressures may struggle with hoarding and squalor behaviors. Mental health symptoms, substance use, trauma, or homelessness can impact a person's struggles in ways that may be reflected in hoarding and squalor behaviors. Solutions look different for each person, depending on the causes and on what is impacting them the most. Solutions may include treatment services, peer support, harm reduction, 'wrap around' services, and recovery.

–Kelly Fitzpatrick

Oregon Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative (OABHI)

The education and training initiatives offered by the Multnomah County Hoarding Task Force have been made possible through our partnership with the Oregon Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative.

The goal of the Behavioral Health Initiative for Older Adults and People with Physical Disabilities (Behavioral Health Initiative) is to better meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities by improving timely access to care from qualified providers who work together to provide coordinated, quality and culturally responsive behavioral health and wellness services.

They are working with their community partners to:

- Improve the population's access to behavioral health providers, services and benefits.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of people who provide services or care to the population.
- Improve the population's knowledge about signs and symptoms of behavioral health problems and how to address them.
- For more information about the Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative in Oregon, please visit <https://oregonbhi.org/>.

Thanks to sponsorship from the Multnomah County Older Adult Behavioral Health Team (OABH), the Hoarding Task Force has been able to provide:

- Buried in Treasures facilitator trainings.
- Laminated Clutter Imagine Rating Scales to attendees of task force trainings.
- Buried in Treasures workbook to low-income groups.
- Community screening and discussion of the film "Do I Need This?" <https://www.doineedthis.org/>
- Statewide educational and training events.

We are also grateful to our partners, whose expertise and time make all of this possible.

- Fair Housing Council of Oregon
- Harmonious Living
- NW Anxiety Institute
- Schnitzer Properties
- ODHS Child Welfare
- Multnomah County Adult Protective Services
- Multnomah County ADVSD Community Services
- Multnomah County Behavioral Health
- Multnomah County Animal Services

These partnerships have allowed us to reach over 3,000 people since 2020, including folks from across the state with lived experience. The Task Force provided consultation with several other counties on building their own task forces to address hoarding behavior. The counties include Douglas, Klamath, Washington, Yamhill, Lane, Marion and King (Seattle).



Some people with Intellectual, Developmental or Cognitive disabilities may appear to have hoarding behaviors. Consider whether what you see as 'clutter' or 'hoarding', may actually be about challenges in cognition, learning, communication and/or managing emotions. How you help will be based on what you learn about the person in the relationship you build, and your strategies for changing behavior will be person centered.

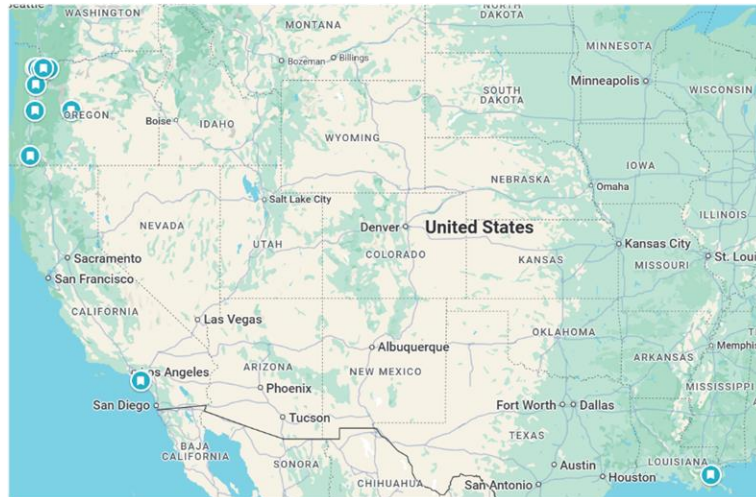
– Joanne O'Connell

Hoarding Behavior Training and Education 2020–2024



Locations

- Portland
- Cornelius
- Gresham
- Hillsboro
- Beaverton
- Salem
- Eugene
- Tualatin
- Bend
- Grants Pass
- New Orleans, LA
- Anaheim, CA
- and online



Impacts of COVID

In 2020 trainings were 100% virtual. Since then, we have transitioned back to more in person trainings. Trainings are currently now 80-90% in person.



With housing being a significant determinant of social health, keeping our community's most vulnerable adults housed is a priority. When residents who struggle with "too much stuff" face evictions, they not only risk losing their housing, but also may experience a tremendous decline in physical and mental health. These outcomes can be extremely traumatic for the individual and have a community-wide impact with the increase in houselessness epidemic. The Multnomah County Hoarding Task Force has delivered trainings to multiple housing providers over the years since its inception, teaching best practices for property managers, housing case managers, service coordinators and a variety of other housing staff. Through this work and advocacy, people experiencing hoarding disorder have been granted more time to resolve the inspection deficiencies, more connection to resources in their communities, and a higher chance of remaining in their homes.

–Miley Stanton-Flowers

Training, Outreach and Education Workgroup



This workgroup receives and responds to inquiries about training, clinical questions, and general information. The workgroup maintains the task force's distribution list for notifications about upcoming training, resources and events.

Members attend and present at state and national conferences. Presentations and training by workgroup members have local, national and international reach. Workgroup members also keep current on the latest research and trends.

Several workgroup members are trained Buried in Treasures workshop facilitators and run groups locally, actively recruit group facilitators and provide one-on-one support and training in the curriculum and clinical/group dynamics.

Buried in Treasures

Buried in Treasures is an evidence-based, supportive, and judgment-free program. These small group, discussion-filled classes provide people with similar experiences with skills and support to understand why they have trouble letting go of items, have clutter around their home, are chronically disorganized, have hoarding tendencies, or compulsively acquire.

This program is not for service providers, family members, or caregivers, but for those living with and wanting change.

70 people were trained as Buried in Treasures facilitators and now provide education on hoarding behavior in counties throughout Oregon.

Workgroup Members

- Miley Stanton-Flowers
- Jill Williams, MA
- Kim James
- Jennifer Turner
- Joanne O'Connell, MA
- Ben Mansinne
- Kelly Fitzpatrick
- Gina Rizk
- Jessica Rivoli
- Melissa Greeney

Information Resources Workgroup



The Multnomah County Hoarding Task Force website was updated for increased accessibility for people with disabilities. In addition, the website is regularly updated with resources and information.

Knowledge and information reduce stigma and isolation, and increase connection between people who need help and the treatment and resources available in their communities.

We now have more than 1,100 subscribers to our email list.

Workgroup Members

- Melissa Greeney
- Darlene Smith
- Lars Fujisato

Data Collection Workgroup



This workgroup creates surveys with targeted questions related to the hoarding experience, knowledge and resources. The workgroup also maintains, reviews and analyzes responses and reports their findings to community partners.

Workgroup Members

- Allison Bonifay, MA, LPC
- Brian Hughes
- Joanne O'Connell, MA

Task Force Steering Committee

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Brian Hughes | Multnomah County ADVSD Adult Protective Services |
| • Jill Williams, MA | Multnomah County ADVSD Older Adult Behavioral Health |
| • Melissa Greeney | Multnomah County ADVSD Community Services |
| • Alison Bonifay, MA, LPC | NW Anxiety Institute |
| • Miley Stanton-Flowers | Harmonious Living |
| • Joanne O'Connell, MA | Multnomah County ADVSD Community Services |
| • Darlene Smith | Multnomah County ADVSD Adult Protective Services |
| • Kelly Fitzpatrick | Multnomah County Behavioral Health Adult Protectives Services |
| • Jessica Rivoli | Oregon DHS Child Welfare |
| • Ben Mansinne | Multnomah County Animal Services |
| • Gina Rizk | Fair Housing Council of Oregon |
| • Shyle Ruder | Fair Housing Council of Oregon |
| • Jennifer Turner | Multnomah County Animal Services |
| • Kim James | City of Portland |



Multnomah County Hoarding Task Force
Aging, Disability & Veterans Services Division
December 2024