

## ARTICLE FOR SR SUN - FEBRUARY

Sadie Says...

Frequently asked questions about older adult Issues

Q. Is hoarding becoming a concern for older adults in our area?

A. Have you ever channel surfed cable TV and come upon a hoarding show?

Maybe it intrigues you to stop and watch for a bit and you feel a little better about your collections of clutter, because you don't feel you are as bad as those on the show.

The truth is, hoarding matters; locally more than 50% of related calls for aging protective services involve hoarding concerns. And if you speak with home health professionals working with older adults, some levels of hoarding are actually seen within a range of 30-80% of the homes visited.

Hoarding impacts many facets of one's life ranging from living arrangements, to physical and mental health as well as relationships.

Due to increased concerns with hoarding in our area, a hoarding task force was formed last year. One may ask - "How important it is to have a hoarding task force in our area?"

"In our rural area, when a hoarding case is discovered, the hoarder is almost always in an emergency situation. These cases are physically, emotionally and financially exhausting to the individual and those professionals who are trying to help. Our goal with this task force is to create a collaborative, managed response to these cases so that the hoarder receives the help they need and the professionals involved know they have the resources for success." Melissa Bottorf shared; she is the PA Lead Link Coordinator for our area. Here's the link for the task force: <https://www.palink8.com/hoarding-task-force>

The task force is currently working on a resource guide which they anticipate should be available mid-year that will list sources to assist with hoarding concerns.

The Mayo Clinic shares the following definition for hoarding:

Hoarding disorder is a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them. A person with hoarding disorder experiences distress at the thought of getting rid of the items. Excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value, occurs. (To read their synopsis go to this link: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hoarding-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20356056>)

"Recent research suggests that nearly 1 in 5 compulsive hoarders have non-hoarding OCD (obsessive compulsive personality) symptoms. Compulsive hoarding is also considered a feature of obsessive compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) and may develop along with other mental illnesses, such as dementia and schizophrenia," statement posted by International OCD Foundation (IOCDF). Here's a link to a fact sheet posted by the IOCDF: <https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Hoarding-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

One entity that services the senior population, Albright LIFE shared that currently 1 in 4 program participants have hoarding concerns. Albright LIFE specializes in health solutions for older adults that keep individuals living at home. They elaborated that of those identified with hoarding tendencies; half of those individuals have been able to reduce the clutter and the other half the LIFE program continues to assist. The program stated that all individuals with these concerns have improved their lifestyles with better living conditions, which in turn keeps them safe allowing both the program team and participant to better manage their health.

Being able to address hoarding concerns is key because many times hoarding issues also jeopardize living arrangements. A first step is realizing one has a hoarding concern; acknowledge the problem and then asking for help. The hoarding task force recommends speaking with a therapist.

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Sadie Says...is brought to you by the Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition.